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[“THAT LITTLE CHILD WITH THE BARE FEET AND BROWN EYES IS ROSAMOND DANE’S SON!”]

ROSAMOND’S HUSBAND.

CHAPTER X.—(continued.)

ALLAN had not had the care of Johnny for more than a year for nothing; and for Johnny’s sake, somehow or other he had a leaning towards all children now, and something about this bright-faced, forlorn little social outcast touched his sympathies in a way that surprised himself.

It was a funny sight, so thought the waiter, the landlady, and the barmaid, as the two latter peeped into the dining-room and saw this incongruous pair—the dark, good-looking stranger (apparently some swell) and the little pauper child—in amiable and friendly intercourse.

Tommy had just finished his pudding and was really incapable of eating any more. Dessert was put on the table, and apples and biscuits were put aside for the young gentleman to carry home, and he was gazing with extreme astonishment at the cigar his new friend was just proceeding to light, never having beheld such an article before.

“Mother Nan has never—that,” pointing with a spoon to the article in question; “but she likes that,” veering the spoon round in the direction of the decanter. “What’s your name, gentleman?” he asked, after a pause, having no shyness whatever about him as we have seen, and being brought up among old people was a remarkably precocious young man for his age.

“My name,” returned his companion, “is Allan. What do you think of it?”

“Not so nice as Tommy,” replied the child, without hesitation. “May I have an apple, Allan?”

“To eat to-morrow, not now,” returned his host, with more prudence than generally characterises young men. “You shall have them all. We will put them up in a bag presently. I’m afraid you must soon be going. You look sleepy. Johnny Nod is coming.”

“I don’t want to go, Allan. I want to stay with you,” returned Tommy, pucking up his face, and drawing down the corners of his mouth. “I don’t want to go back to Mother Nan. I like you best,” now hurriedly descending from his perch and burrowing his head

into Allan’s arm. “Let me stay with you,” beginning to sob, and raising a pair of beautiful brown eyes drowned in tears to his host’s disconcerted face.

“He had brought a nice Old Man of the Sea on his shoulders,” he said to himself, frankly. “What was he to do with this child, who was clinging to him like a limpet, and imploring to be allowed to stay with him with broken sobs.

The entrance of Mother Nan with one loud, imperative knock settled the matter. Mother Nan in a large, black poke-bonnet, and with authority in her voice,—

“Time for bed, Tommy. Sorry to send him to you so awful shabby and poorly dressed, but one pound five a-month don’t leave much margin for clothes when a child has a healthy appetite.”

Here was a broad hint, and Allan instinctively put his hand to his waistcoat pocket, which Mother Nan perceiving, she continued volubly,—

“In fact, dear gentleman, I’m a kind-hearted, silly sort of body, as all the neighbours says, and anyone but me would have sent him to the poor-house long ago. What’s

fifteen pound a-year for the board and lodging, and clothes of a big boy like that, with milk at fourpence a quart, and the money not paid regular. It's just for charity I do it, and nothing else, and it's a hard pinch sometimes. If the child was honest born—"

"Never mind that," interrupted Allan angrily. "That's not his fault."

"No; and any one can see with half an eye that he comes of gentle folk—anyway, he is by the look of him. I should say his father was a gentleman."

Allan was not disposed to stop and discuss Tommy's parentage with this loud-voiced, fiery-eyed virago, and turning the subject adroitly, asked,—

"How long she had had the charge of him?"

"Nigh three years, she told him. He had been handed over to her by a coastguard's wife who was going to America, and she took him as a favour and there he was, gesticulating."

During this salacious Tommy had fallen asleep, with his head against Allan's chair, his hand in his, and now Mother Nan made a swoop upon him, gathered him up in her arms; and pocketing a large bonus from Allan, with a promise of letting the child come round some time next morning, she bounced triumphantly out of the room.

When she had passed the window Allan rose, pushed his chair back, and walked out into the passage and to the inn door. It was a lovely, soft summer's evening, and he stood with his hands in his pockets, surveying the queer old street, the church at the turn of the same where he had seen Rosamond for the second time, and the rocks overhead, slowly flapping their way home.

It was rarely Mrs. Bisset, of the George, had a customer like Allan. Here were mostly commercial travellers, and were not too abundant; but the bar drove a fine local trade, which paid well.

And her woman's curiosity was stimulated by this handsome young gentleman who seemed to have dropped from the clouds, and who had taken the queer fancy of bringing Nan's Tommy home with him to dinner. She resolved to have a bit of a chat with him; times were dull, and a stranger from beyond the Marshes was a real godsend.

So, with a little preliminary cough, and a complacent looking down of her black satin apron, she approached the young man on the steps, and undered the obvious fact that "it was a fine evening."

"Come out for a gossip," thought Allan, suddenly wheeling round, "and I'm her man, but I must be cautious."

"Lovely evening," she returned, politely. "What a queer old place you have here?" pointing up and down the street with the end of his cigar.

"Yes, very old and uncommon out of the way—but healthy."

"Uncommon out of the world, as you say," he assented. "I suppose living here is something like a slug's existence in a head of cabbage—no events from year's end to year's end?"

"Oh, I wouldn't say that!" rejoined Mrs. Bisset, somewhat nettled at this remark. "We have our events, like other people. There's many a queer story about Drydd."

"You have no gentry about here, I suppose, or very few?"

"We've only Mr. Cameron, the rector, now, and poor, dear man, he has quite lost his mind and his memory."

"You don't say so," ejaculated Allan, incredulously. "I came down here specially to see him. I am exceedingly sorry to hear this."

"It was all that flower-rooting, fern gathering nonsense that turned his poor brain in my opinion," said Mrs. Bisset, decisively. "He caught his death of cold on the Marshes, and has never been the same since. He is away for a bit now, and we have a curate, a rare, fine preacher."

"And are there no families in the neigh-

bourhood, or have they all gone away too?" inquired Allan artfully.

"There were, the Danes, of the Manor House, a splendid old family," rejoined Mrs. Bisset, now as it were, warming up into a good gossiping vein, and clearing her throat and squaring her elbows prepared to enjoy herself.

CHAPTER XI.

"The old lady were a queer one, and no mistake, living in the same two rooms year after year, and she as well and hale as I am. She was as mad as a March hare."

"Yes, go on," said Allan, removing his cigar. "Tell me all about these people. I like to hear the history of a family, even if I don't know them."

"Well, the old one had a sweetly pretty granddaughter. They called her the 'Rose of Drydd,' and with good reason, too. You never in your life saw any one so pretty," and Allan warmly agreed with Mrs. Bisset in his own mind. "She had a dreary life of it—no company, and might to do but wander about the Marshes all alone. I need not tell you that she got into rare mischief," nodding her head and shutting her eyes at the mere recollection.

"Eh, what?" stammered Allan, dropping his cigar on the gravel at his feet. "What do you mean?"

"I'll tell you by-and-by," proceeded Mrs. Bisset, complacently, knowing she had a good story to relate, and meaning to take her own time about the telling. "The old lady died, and the girl—Miss Rosamond was her name—Miss Rosamond Dane, lived on alone at the Manor till her people came from India."

"Yes, yes," acquiesced Allan, who was literally boiling over with impatience; "well, and what then?"

"Before they came back, and before the old lady died, there was talk of a young man been seen about it, mysteriously."

"Oh, indeed, a young man?"

"Yes. No one knew exactly who he was; but he wasn't, so they say, a gentleman."

"No?"

"However, be that as it may, he and Miss Rose were keeping company on the sly, so I've been told. I never saw him myself, mind you—(little did the good lady imagine as she turned to impress this on Allan that her eyes were resting on him that very moment). "It's getting a bit chilly now," she proceeded, "and if you would not mind coming inside I'd like to tell you the story of Miss Rosamond Dane."

And Miss Rosamond's husband, nothing loth, threw away his cigar, and followed the landlady into her own sanctum.

"I'm afraid of the rheumatics," she said, as she seated herself on a roomy horse-hair sofa. "This Drydd is a dampish kind of place, and I got them bad."

"And about this young lady?" said Allan, hitching himself up into a deep window-sill, and devouring his companion with his eyes, whilst his heart beat so loud, and so fast that he seemed to hear nothing else.

"Oh, indeed, it's not a very nice story, and I would not be telling it to a young man like you only you are a black stranger, and never saw her and never will see her, and I'm in a talking humour, as it happens. Of course, I depend on your honour. Not a word of what I say is to travel further, and, before going further, might I make so bold as to ask your name?"

Allan was in the act, naturally enough, of saying "Gordon," but he pulled himself up with an effort, and said instead,—

"Kingsford."

"Um—Mr. Kingsford or Captain Kingsford?"

"Lord Kingsford."

"Lawk a massy! who'd expect to see a lord down here!" she ejaculated, staring at him with round eyes and parted lips, and an expression of intense amazement.

Never in her life had Mrs. Bisset seen or spoken to a real live lord before, and now she came to stare at him particularly. He quite fulfilled her expectations—he looked like one.

"Never mind me," he exclaimed, "but go on about the young lady."

"The young lady? Oh, to be sure! Well, the old woman died, leaving a mighty queer will. Every one said she was cracked. Miss Rosamond got every penny of the Dane property, nigh six thousand a-year."

"Six thousand a-year!" echoed the gentleman in the window, in a tone of profound amazement.

"But she was not to touch a halfpenny of it till she married or came to the age of twenty-five."

"Yes?"

"Well, then, her mother came home from India, and carried her off, money and all, and there, she is now living somewhere like a princess, with crowds of gentlemen after her, of course, and as many offers as there are days in the week—but not married, at which every one wonders, and don't know the reason; but (very triumphantly) I do. Would you like to hear it?"

A nod of the head was all Allan could offer, in the shape of an answer, and, thus encouraged, Mrs. Bisset proceeded very glibly,—

"That little boy that you picked up and brought home is a fine, pretty boy, ain't he? Well, and you had him to dinner, and got a good look at him; and now I'm going to tell you something that will surprise you. Only me and Mr. Cameron's housekeeper and one or two others know it. That little beggar child with the bare feet and brown eyes is Miss Rosamond Dane's son!"

Mrs. Bisset drew back her head as if to survey the full effect of this announcement, and it surpassed her most sanguine expectations.

The young lord gave such a violent start that he knocked his elbow clean through a pane of glass, as in a strange, imperative tone he exclaimed,—

"What!—what the dace do you mean?"

"I mean what I say, no more and no less," said Mrs. Bisset, doggedly. "Tommy, at Mother Nan's, is Miss Dane's child, though, of course, you'll keep it dark."

"Miss Dane's child!" murmured her husband, wiping his forehead as he spoke, and looking extremely pale, only that he was sitting with his back to the light, and it did not appear. "How do you make that out?"

"Very easily. After the Brande came home Miss Dane and old Maggs came down here quite on the quiet for three or four months. I used to see Miss Dane, almost every day, walking in the Marshes all alone, but only in the distance. She never came to church, nor into the village, and saw no one—it was queer! And, one day, a man I know came upon her quite sudden like on a footbridge. You would not know where it is, but it's a long way off, and she was crying like anything, and talking to herself and wringing her hands, and seemed in terrible grief about something."

"Yes, and then—what next?" he asked, with feverish anxiety.

"The next thing was, she was given out to have gone away, but it was all a hoax. She and Maggs—we knew afterwards—were there shut up in the old lady's rooms, and it came out after, through a strange doctor's servant, that he had attended a young lady here in Drydd Manor, and that she was dying in giving birth to a child, a fine healthy boy. And it was a queer thing, that just about that time Maggs came down to a woman I know with a baby in her arms, and a fine cook-and-a-bull story about her niece's child, and offering to pay seven-and-sixpence a week. I knew it was Miss Dane's will, not that it takes a bit after her, or any of the family."

"And how did you know?"

"Well, sir, to be quite frank and plain with you, Maggs and I were always friends—being at school together—and she said it was more

than flesh and blood could stand to keep the secret, and just before she went she told me it was Miss Rosamond's child."

A long pause followed this announcement, and for quite five minutes Allan did not speak.

"Rosamond's child!" this little neglected village pariah, that even children might not play with; that had no name, no mother, was also his child, the heir now to a coronet, to lands, to honours, and respect.

It took him some time to realise this fact, and to find steady and coherent speech.

"And does the child's mother never come to see it?" he asked, presently, with his eyes on the ground.

"Come to see it? Bless your heart, no. She never troubles herself about it one way or another. She just hates it like poison, I fancy, and wishes it was dead, and, indeed, you can't blame her for that; for it's a living disgrace. What I think bad of it, no mother ever noticing it, not writing, but her sometimes not paying a penny for months, and she rolling in riches; to grudge the poor little creature a few shillings, to send her down-right wicked; and Mother Nan, who do drink, and when she's a bit 'on' she scold him no how. Only he's a spirited little chap, his heart would be broken long ago. I'm often thinking of him, and wishing I could take him myself" (which was a mere figure of speech).

"Well, Mrs. Bisset, I have been listening to your story with the deepest interest," said Allan at last. "I suppose you have no clue to the child's mother, and don't know where she lives, eh?" now getting out of the window, and coming forward.

"No more than the cat there on the roof."

"This was conclusive. And you don't know anything of the friends, I suppose, nor where they may be found?"

"No more than the man in the moon!"

"Ab, well, I've made up my mind, if you think there'll be no objection, to adopt that name for Tommy."

"Lord a mercy on you! you're out o' your mind!"

"Not a bit of it. I am rich, and can afford to please my fancy. I've taken a fancy to him, and I'm sure he will be better off with me than Mother Nan!" smiling.

"But what will a young man like you do dragging about a child like that? It will look uncommon queer," objected Mrs. Bisset, imperiously forgetting (that she was speaking to a lord).

"I don't in the least mind that."

"And you a bachelor?"

"Who told you I was a bachelor?"

"No one, but I'm sure you are by the look of you."

"Appearances are deceitful, Mrs. Bisset. For once in your life you have made a bad shot. I am a married man!"

"Mrs. Bisset once more ejaculated,—

"Lawk a mercy!" and cast up her hands in amazement.

"I'm sure I don't know why you should be so astonished," he returned, impatiently. "I suppose I'm not 'er young to marry, am I?"

"No, no—but I'm surprised. Is the lady living?"

"Yes."

"Any family?"

"Yes—one."

"Boy or girl?"

"Boy."

"Oh, then it's just a kind of little compensation for him, I suppose, you'll be wanting—one child has a lonely time of it. Well, it's a great chance for poor Tommy. It was a good wind blew you across his path. He's a well-dispositioned child and truthful, though where he got it I don't know; and you see, as I tell you, he has gentle blood in his veins by the mother's side. I make no doubt but that he and your own little boy will get on together and be great friends."

Allan made no doubt on the subject either, agreed with Mrs. Bisset entirely, and making some polite remark about the lateness of the

hour, bade her good-night, and left the old lady to her reflections and her supper.

He did not go upstairs, nor into the coffee-room. He went out and walked—he did not quite know where. His mind was in a chaos—his brain was in a whirl. He felt in a kind of fever, and nothing but the cool sea air blowing over the Marshes would moderate his temperature, as, with his hat off, he strolled along wrapped in very strange and novel thoughts.

He was a father—father of a son of four years old. This idea took him some time to digest, and he could see that the child resembled him and his people. Mrs. Bisset was right—he had not a trace of Rosamond.

He was a splendid little fellow, and his heart had somehow warmed to him from the first, and he certainly was a rich prize, well worth coming for to Drydd.

He had arrived in haste to search for his wife, and instead fate had given him a son.

And Rosamond—who had disowned, cast off, and neglected their child—what could he think of her! His mind was set against her—he was filled with anger, disappointment, and outraged love.

If she had cared for him she never would have deserted their helpless child. Why, the very poorest of the poor had affection for their offspring, and here was she, an heiress of thousands, grudging a few shillings to support poor Tommy.

Facts looked black, very black. If she had even come once to see him he would not have minded, but to ignore his existence altogether, and leave him, so to speak, in the gutter was abominable, wicked, inhuman.

How changed she must be! Four years were a long time to a girl of her age, the innocent, comely maiden who lived a life of nun-like retirement, and gladly ran away with the first young man she saw, was now a beautiful heiress, with thousands per annum, rulers at her feet, a kind of leader of fashion, and only too anxious to forget the little fault of her early girlhood, to forget her long-lost husband, and that he could allow for and forgive; but to forget and neglect her first-born—that he would never pardon—never!

He would take Tommy home to Kingsford, introduce him as his son and as his heir. Who his mother was, or where she was, was nobody's concern—(was it not, my good sir?)—but his own.

He would make an entirely fresh start in life as Allan Kingsford, and sink Allan Gordon altogether among the misty memories of the past.

No one knew much about him; he had never been a society man, and people were sure to think much more of Lord Kingsford than of his antecedents.

He was so much altered in appearance, he told himself, that his own mother would not have recognized him had she been alive; and were he to meet Rosamond now they would be strangers—at least.

It was impossible that in him she would trace the familiar, bearded face of her former lover and her long-lost husband, Allan Gordon.

And here again his indignation rose within him hotly. She had never acknowledged her marriage, and had allowed their child to go forth to the world nameless.

Of course it was ridiculous to expect that an heiress, with the world at her feet, he said to himself, with a suzer, would care to blazon forth her *mésalliance* with a poor, hard-working civil engineer. What tale had she told her people when she hid the fact of her marriage—what lie?

"Aye, I have a heavy reckoning to make up with you when I find you, Miss Rosamond Dane," he said to himself, as he turned once more towards the George Inn; "not so much on my own behalf as Tommy's. Little, little do you imagine, you very unnatural young woman, that you are the mother of Lord Kingsford's heir!"

CHAPTER XII.

NEXT morning Allan had a long interview with "Mother Nan," and, after much bargaining, secured the custody of his son, and the promise of secrecy, for ten pounds.

He left her to invent any tale she pleased for the benefit of the child's mother, but he declined to give his name and address. Ten pounds' worth of "Old Tom" was something to Mother Nan, and, after some crocodile tears, she rigged out Tommy in the best clothes he had (which was not saying much), and started him off, hand in hand, but she but known, with his father.

He was fitted out in a kind of way, and a more respectable get-up at the hotel, and two days later Allan and he returned to London.

A first-rate nurse was engaged by Allan, who felt uncommonly out of his element, and inclined to laugh in the woman's face whom he put in charge of Master Tommy, and she, for her part, was "quite flabbergasted," as she expressed herself to her intimates, at being hired and her character taken up by a good-looking, single-looking young gentleman, just like an officer.

However, the wages and perquisites were well worth her attention, and she accepted the post of Tommy's nurse with great alacrity; but who was Tommy's mamma? No one knew; and yet Tommy was spoken of by his father as his son and heir. Who was Lady Kingsford? Where was she?

Nothing satisfactory could be gained from Tommy himself, who had no recollection of any mamma, only "Mother Nan."

There was something very queer, not to say fishy, about the whole business, quoth Miss Tait, but all the same, money was money, and Lord Kingsford was a nice-spoken young man, and seemed very fond of Tommy.

She overheard the following very odd conversation one day, as she stood outside in the passage, at the door of Lord Kingsford's dressing room. He was preparing to dine out, and undergoing all the mental agony attendant on making a first-class white tie. Two failures lay beside him on the floor, and Tommy sat on a chair with a trumpet in his hand, kicking his legs backwards and forwards, in a most independent manner.

Tommy (who would recognise him now?) Tommy, in a splendid black velvet frock, with point lace collar and cuffs, silk socks, and lovely shoes! He was saying as Tait came within earshot,—

"Allan, I wish you would stay at home and play with me!"

"I wish I could," returned the other, without hesitation. "But I say, old chap, you must not call me Allan, you know; it won't do; you are to call me 'Father.'"

"Father!" echoed the mite; "why, Poppy had a father, a very ugly man, but I had none. I can't call you that!"

"Oh, yes, you can," returned Allan, now getting into his coat, and turning towards the child as he spoke. "I'm your father, you know, and you are going to live with me always now."

"I know I am, of course, and I am very glad for I like you. But Poppy had a mother. Have I a mother, too?" anxiously. "Poppy's mother used to beat her," in a tone of real tragedy. "I don't want a mother."

"Then, that's all right," replied Allan, as he turned away, and fished a handkerchief out of a sashet, with a very grave face. "You need not be frightened, old man, no one will beat you; you have no mother."

Here Tait, who had been lingering outside, entered, having made a note of all she had heard, and carried off Tommy, who went away in the highest spirits, on the strength of the welcome and delightful intelligence, that he had no mother.

"Poor little chap," said Allan, with a regretful sigh. "I suppose I'll have to try and be both, and I don't know in the least how I'm to set about it."

In two minutes more he was in a bansom, en route to a grand dinner in Belgrave-square, where, as a rich, good-looking, titled bachelor he was made a great deal of.

But before he left London for his country place, "Armine Court," it had become generally mooted about that the new Lord Kingsford, such a handsome, distinguished-looking young man, was a widower (so interesting, with one child, a little boy, and that he never spoke of his wife to anyone. It was evidently a painful subject; probably she died when his child was born. And with these tidings preceding him. Lord Kingsford and his heir came down to Armine Court, and established themselves quite accidentally and unconsciously in the neighbourhood of a young lady, who was the wife of one, the mother of the other—the beautiful Miss Rosamond Dane.

CHAPTER XIII.

AND now to return to Rosamond, after all these years, and see how she has fared since we last saw her.

She is greatly changed, not so much in person as in mind; although the beautiful Miss Dane, with her fashionable clothes, fashionable airs, and fashionable fringe, no more resembles "the Rose of Drydd" than a sweet wild flower resembles a stiff and artificial-looking camellia. In mind Rosamond is fashionable, too; her early griefs have stunted her good qualities, her early affections being nipped in the bud. She is now as hard and worldly-minded, and heartless, and callous, to all appearances at least, as any young woman between the four seas.

She is very lovely, and is perfectly conscious of the fact; and gives herself great airs on the strength of her reputation of being a "London beauty." She is, moreover, a great heiress, as times go, and thoroughly understands her own value, thanks to Mrs. Meggs.

She never gives a thought to Drydd, to Allan, and to the little grave she once wept over. She pictures to herself that all these things happened in a former state of existence. And when her mind sometimes conscientiously touches on the past, she recoils from it with a shudder. She firmly believes that Allan, under another name, betrayed and deserted her; and sometimes, as she stands a kind of queen among other girls, the thought of what she believes herself to be makes her ordinarily pale face crimson to the roots of her hair, with an agony of shame.

"If people only knew," she would say to herself, with clenched hands. "If these men who make love to me had the smallest idea of the living lie, the whitened sepulchre I am, what would they think—what would the world say?"

But the world knew nothing, and said nothing, beyond the common remark, "that the beautiful Miss Dane was very supercilious, very disdainful, and very hard to please."

After some months in Florence Miss Dane had begun to recover her spirits a little. After all, at nineteen there is a good deal of elasticity in one's disposition. She turned over a new leaf that very much amazed her mother and Miss Brand, who were disposed to keep her well in the background, and let her enjoy the rôle of the poor relation; and, being so broken in spirit and health for a long time, they never really guessed at the kind of girl that they had to deal with.

A battle royal before long opened their eyes to their very widest extent, and in the following manner:—Colonel, Mrs. and Miss Brand had been to a grand reception, and were leaving their "Cinderella" at home as usual. The said Cinderella, pacing the roof of their hired palace with her hands locked behind her and staring at the dark, star-scattered sky, was thinking of many things, and had got hold of some new ideas.

She would no longer live in sackcloth and ashes; she would make a fresh start, enjoy her youth, and bury her old past in oblivion.

To enjoy life she must go out and mix with

people, like other girls. She must dress, and ride, and drive, and sing, and dance, and spend money. She must no longer be crushed, and cowed, and bound down by her mother and Louisa, and keep all her life for what, after all, was not her fault. Her sin, if sin there was, surely should not lie at her door! She made up her mind to begin life afresh—enjoy it she might not, but she could pretend to do so, and it would end in becoming second nature, and bringing her forgetfulness.

Next morning as the three ladies were sitting in the saloon after breakfast Rosamond suddenly said,—

"You seem to have enjoyed your dance very much last night, Louisa?"

"Yes, I did, of course!" returned the other, with a cold stare, resuming the perusal of a note in her hand.

"In future I shall go out too—in future you may accept invitations for me, mother," remarked Rosamond.

For a moment there was an impressive, awestruck silence, and then Mrs. Brand said, very sharply,—

"Rosamond, you must be mad! Consider your position!"

"I am not the least mad, mother. My position has hitherto been a cruel and an unfortunate one. I want a change; I am tired of being miserable."

"A change! You should be very thankful to be as you are. What more would you have, pray?"

"I would have balls, theatres, a horse to ride, plenty of nice new dresses, a maid, jewellery."

"Great heavens! You are raving!"

"No I am not, my dear mother. Why should I not have some of the advantages of being a great heiress?"

At this social bomb, so unexpected, so sudden, Mrs. Brand became scarlet, then ghastly white. Of course the secret could not be kept from Rosamond always. But how did she know?

"What do you mean?" inquired her mother, angrily.

"I mean that if grandmamma left me all her money, more than six thousand a-year, I should like to spend at least some of it. I have only two sound in my purse, only two dresses in my wardrobe, and I don't like being poor when I need not be so. I'm not fond of the rôle of Cinderella!"

"You must remember you are not your own mistress till you are twenty-five, and this new whim of yours, if you should court retirement, is ridiculous. Your money is ours at present—you are a minor."

"I do not like talking about money in this way to you, mother, and you are most welcome to half of all I have," said Rosamond, in a cool, decided tone; "but if you insist on keeping me in leading strings I rebel, and I shall appeal to my solicitors. I am not bound to live under your roof, and from what I have heard there are trustees. I can live with some person, no doubt, who will see matters in a better light as far as I am concerned. You and I do not pretend to care for each other as mother and child. We were strangers for eighteen years—we must to a certain extent always be strangers—but we need not quarrel. We will part friends. Louisa is far more really your daughter than I am. You don't care for me—you don't really know me. You think I am a half silly, ignorant country girl. I am not! I was once, but I have had a lesson that has made me, I believe, as hard, and as cold, and as worldly as anyone in the city of Florence."

During this long speech Mrs. and Miss Brand gaped with distended eyes and parted lips at the tall white figure standing beside the table. Was this the child, easily led, easily hoodwinked Rosamond? No, most decidedly not, and they must temporise. If she went and put herself in the hands of trustees the yearly income went too, and that would never do. So they became gradually quite complacent, and stifled their feelings, and entered

into all her views without further expostulation or argument.

In due time Miss Dane burst forth on Florentine society like a beautiful butterfly, and turned the heads of half the young men in the place.

She rode, and danced, and flirted, and lived in a perpetual, almost feverish, state of mental and bodily activity.

It had become known that she was the heiress—the golden goose—and many and many, and titled were her suitors. Not a few impoverished or even passably wealthy noblemen laid their hearts and their coronets at her feet, simply to be spurned, and her inaccessibility became as much a byword as her wealth and her beauty.

After two years' wandering the Brands returned home, and, by Rosamond's wish, rented a very pretty country place in a fashionable county about forty miles from London.

Here they settled, gave grand entertainments, hunted in winter, had tennis parties in summer, and were quite among the leading spirits of the place, and very popular people.

By chance it happened that the great, big empty Hall, about three miles distant, was called Armine Court. It had not been occupied for years, and was the property of the new lord, whom people said was a bachelor, fond of wandering about, and, if at home, a regular London club man.

Armine Court was quite the show place of that part of the country, was visited by artists and tourists from afar, was even desecrated by picnics, was uninhabited, stately, and deserted, save for a few gardeners about the once-magnificent grounds, and a couple of army pensioners in either lodge.

Miss Brand was married, had succeeded in snaring a heavy, bacchic squire, and had taken herself and her handsome trousseau away to the north of England, and Mrs. Brand had replaced her and filled her gap in the family circle by a very pretty, bright little niece of her own called Amy Glen.

She was older than Rosamond, but looked younger, being very fair and petite, with forget-me-not eyes and retroussé nose, and hair the colour of spun silk.

She knew nothing of Rosamond's past, and she and Rosamond were excellent friends, far more en rapport than Rosamond had ever been with Miss Brand.

Amy was an amusing, shallow, empty-headed little butterfly, with warm and sudden fancies, which passed away, fortunately for her, and were easily forgotten.

She had been in love half-a-dozen times, and yet she was not heart-broken, and was quite ready to be in love half-a-dozen times again.

Love with her, like many men, was more a pleasant piquant sensation for the time it lasted, and a little episode in her life, and no more.

Now, Rosamond had no love affairs, and waged in her own person a vendetta against mankind. Dozens, I am sorry to say, she had flirted with and encouraged, and then tossed aside as if they were a faded bouquet.

She was avenging herself on every man she met, every man who was enamored by her beautiful face, for the wretch who had once betrayed her; and wherever she went, as Freddy Brand admirably remarked to a bosom friend, she left a track marked by the slain behind her.

CHAPTER XIV.

It was Rosamond's custom to drive over to Armine Court sometimes, and then, leaving the little pony-carriage outside the gates, ramble through the woods with Amy, or about the pleasure-grounds, or over the moss-covered walks in the old walled-in garden. This great, deserted, forlorn old place had a soothing influence on her, an attraction for her, for which she could not account.

At the highest point of view, up through the woods, on a kind of a plateau, at the end of a steep climb, stood a pagoda, from which a fine view all over the country was to be obtained. It was called by the name of "Kingsford's Folly."

Rosamond was very fond of climbing up this Folly, leaning her elbows on the balustrades on the top, and surveying the country.

This particular evening she had come up alone, leaving Amy gathering ferns in the woods, the ponies at the nearest gate, and indulged in a whole hour of solitude and a multitude of day-dreams. At last the stiffness of her elbows, and the aching western sun warned her that it was time to return, and with a sigh she replaced her hat and slowly commenced to descend the steps of the pagoda, daintily gathering up her dress.

Two people were sitting on the steps at the bottom as she came down, sitting, of course, with their backs to her—a young man and a little boy. The child was leaning confidentially against his companion, who was busily engaged in cutting something out of wood—some toy, apparently.

Visitors, like herself, thought Rosamond, come to see far-famed Armine Court. The sound of her steps was unheard by either of them, they were so eagerly intent on the work in hand, until "Would you kindly permit me to pass?" roused the gentleman effectually, and he started up at once, hat in hand, perceiving a very beautiful, tall, slight, somewhat imperious looking girl standing beside him. He looked at her a second time with a sharp, quick glance, and in an instant his bronzed complexion had become of a faint ashen hue, and he staggered a little to one side and leant against the stone balustrades leading up to the pagoda for support.

"Are you ill—is anything the matter?" asked Rosamond in alarm.

"Oh!"—recovering a little as he spoke—"it is nothing, a little giddiness. Do not be alarmed—it will soon go off," not looking at her as he spoke.

Rosamond never knew what impelled her to speak to him again instead of passing on—this tall, dark stranger, who seemed now quite self-possessed and restored, and who had stared at her so steadily, and yet there was nothing rude in his gaze.

"It is a pretty place, is it not?" waving her hand towards the woods and distant towers. "I advise you to make the most of your time, for Lord Kingsford is expected home very shortly, and then we shall all be shut out," with a smile. "What a sweet little boy, glancing admiringly at Tommy, who was gazing with round astonished eyes at the beautiful young lady who stood above him on the steps. Little did he guess that this lovely apparition was his mother; but Allan in a second glance had recognised his wife. True the girl who had so suddenly descended the pagoda steps was exquisitely dressed in a soft white dress, evidently from artistic hands; her hat was half-covered with drooping white feathers, and silver bangles were on her wrists, long tan gloves on her hands, a crimson parasol was tucked under her arm, her hair was worn in a fringe, her face was harder, but its outlines were sharper and more beautiful than of yore. This was no pink and white country bumpkin, but a lovely, fashionable, supercilious looking London girl, and yet all the name it was Rosamond—his wife.

She looked curiously at this dark, handsome stranger, leaning against, bareheaded, the balustrade, who had not even opened his lips as yet. His pale face, his quivering nostrils, his whole appearance transformed by some sudden and inexplicable emotion, whilst the little boy, childlike, had seized the half-finished toy.

"You are ill," she urged again. "Let me send for some brandy—for a doctor. My servants are close by with the pony-carriage." "I am not ill!" he replied, rather roughly. "It is nothing, nothing," passing his handkerchief across his forehead as he spoke. "Do

you live near here?" he asked, rousing himself with an effort, and walking beside her down the steps.

"Yes, about three miles off. I adore this old place. I enjoy rambling about in the roads so much," walking still beside the stranger down the hill. "I do wish the owner would not come home just yet!"

"Why?" he inquired, without looking at her.

"Because I suppose he will soon put a stop to strangers marauding about the place," now putting up her parasol. "I believe he is a regular recluse, and doesn't want to see his fellow-creatures—a woman-hater too."

"Who has been telling you this?" he asked, slowly.

"Oh! rumour."

"Rumour is wrong for once; he is not at all averse to society, and will only be too glad to see people coming and going about the place the same as usual. I hope you will, as often as you please!"

"I. You hope. Why, do you know him?" raising her brows in amazement; "do you know the present Lord Kingsford?"

"As far as anyone can know themselves."

"Do you mean that you are he?"

Allan bowed profoundly, and said, "I must introduce myself, as there is no one else to do it for me."

"And I suppose I must do ditto," said Rosamond, blushing a little and laughing as she spoke. "I am Miss Dame; we live over there," pointing with her parasol; "my mother, who has married again, Mrs. Brand, Colonel Brand and I, at a pretty old place we have taken for the present, called Violet Hill. I daresay you know it."

"No, I am quite a stranger down here," replied Allan, "and know nothing of the neighbourhood."

"You must have arrived quite unexpectedly?" she said, glancing at him interrogatively.

"I came last night."

"And is this your little boy?" nodding at Tommy, who had been trotting along hand-in-hand with his father up to the present, his toy clutched in his grasp.

"Yes,"—(and yours, too, he might have added, but he did not.)

"What a sweet little cherub, and how like you!" looking critically at Tommy. A pause, and then she said, "and when are we to see Lady Kingsford—is she here?"

This was an awkward question, and for nearly a whole minute Allan could not think of any appropriate reply.

Rosamond herself unexpectedly came to the rescue, saying, "I don't mean the Dowager, I mean your wife, this little boy's mother!"

"Yes, I quite understand," he said stiffly; "he has never known a mother."

"No! Poor little darling! How sad. I think there is nothing so forlorn as a motherless child."

To this observation her companion made no reply, and the two walked down one of the wide grassy avenues in silence; she thinking, "Evidently his wife is a sore subject; she died when the child was born. What a splendid part he will make for some girl in the neighbourhood, this interesting young widower!"

A turn in the avenue brought a low pony carriage and smart pair of chestnut ponies into sight, with a very dapper groom in top boots standing at their heads, whilst a girl in a blue dress was evidently conveying a quantity of ferns into the carriage.

"I've got such a lot of 'hart's tongue,'" she said, over her shoulder; "nearly a haystack of other ferns."

"You've been caught in the act of robbing the woods, Amy; here is Lord Kingsford himself. Lord Kingsford—Miss Glen—convicted of theft."

Amy, turning round with a startled face and increased colour, found herself confronted by a tall, dark, young man, with a small child beside him; a young man who certainly

looked like Lord Kingsford. Amy was a good deal fluttered, and made a series of pretty little apologies, which, needless to say, were laughed away by Allan, who had now entirely recovered his habitual self-possession; and he himself helped to put the young ladies into their pony carriage, and to stow away the ferns and grasses with the best results and into the smallest space. Amy chattering and smiling away all the time.

"I hope you will find your way over to Violet Hill, Lord Kingsford," said Rosamond, as she took up the reins. "Colonel Brand will call, of course, but please don't be ceremonious. We have tea and tennis every Thursday afternoon, and we shall be very glad to see you."

In answer to her he raised his hat, and muttered some unintelligible reply, and as his eyes met Rosamond's point-blank she felt a kind of thrill of recognition that made every atom of colour fade from her face.

He had Allan's eyes, and the effect of this discovery unnerved her to such an extent that she could barely hold the reins, hardly guide the excessively hot-tempered little pair who were now tearing along on their road home.

Allan watched her as she dashed round the corner and out of sight. Who would fancy, what *some* person would believe, that that pretty girl who had just driven away was his wife—the wife he had not seen for more than four years—the wife who had ignored and forgotten him, and deserted Tommy? How strange that they should meet thus, that she had not even a glimmering of the truth!

Tommy found his playfellow very unusually silent, as they slowly wended their way home, and his constant utterance, "Talk, father, talk," met with but little attention—and who can wonder?

Rosamond, too, was unusually distant; she hated having the past brought back to her in any shape or form, and that man's eyes had evoked a spirit that latterly had seemed to have been successfully laid. Her answers to Amy were very distant and random; she did not join in her little friend's eulogies on Lord Kingsford's appearance, nor her raptures over his dear little boy. She felt every nerve unstrung, she could not say why. It was odd that a passing resemblance had shaken her so much; she felt cold and trembling all over.

"There is no Lady Kingsford," returned Rosamond, "he said that the boy had no mother."

"Dear me, a widower, how romantic! How all the mothers and daughters in the place will be exercised in their minds when they know that!" exclaimed Miss Glen. "He would suit you admirably, Rosie; you would scarcely turn up your nose at him, now would you?"

"What a little match-making witch you are, Amy!" flipping one of the ponies, who instantly lashed out playfully at the splash-board.

"You need not put me down in this race for a coronet, for, as I have told you fifty times over, I never intend to marry, never—never—and I would not have you speculate on Lord Kingsford; he does not look like a marrying man."

"I suppose that child is the heir."

"Naturally."

"He looks about four years old. I wonder how old Lord Kingsford is himself?"

"Oh—four or five-and-thirty, I should say."

"Not so old as that; he had a look to me as if he had come through some great trouble, and had been aged by that. What do you think, Rosie?"

"I think you are more full of fancies than anyone I have ever met; but granting your idea to be the correct one, I suppose the trouble was his wife's death. Here we are!"

(To be continued.)

Good housekeeping lies at the root of all the real ease and satisfaction in existence.

EVEN in the fiercest uproar of our stormy passions, conscience, though in her softest whispers, gives to the supremacy of rectitude the voice of an undying testimony.

YOUNG AND SO FAIR.

CHAPTER XLIX.

THE WEDDING MORNING.

The morning of Sibel Fitzgerald's wedding-day came at last, with a shower of snowflakes, and a dismal thaw. The bride was the only person in the house who did not ask if it were wet or fine, and seemed utterly unconcerned at the deplorable state of the weather. A man on the scaffold would scarcely care if he left this world in a drizzling rain or a blaze of sunshine. Greater concerns would weigh on his mind, and the lesser must always be swallowed up by the greater. Sibel gave herself no time for thought, or else she felt as if she must go mad. Yesterday she would not touch a flower; to-day, when everyone was begging her not to trouble herself, nothing would content her but arranging the vases for the table. Once, when the post came in, her busy hands dropped down on her lap, and she gave a startled look towards the door; but there was nothing but a receipted bill, and a circular about a wedding-cake.

"My dear, you will be late," said Lord Wentworth, as he came into the dining-room to give a glance round. "Let some of the maids attend to that, whilst you go and dress. I really must beg of you to go, or else Lushington will be having," he added, seriously.

"Plenty of time, I shan't take long to dress. Are not these lilies lovely?" holding up some beautiful scabrous lilies which had been sent from the Court.

"Yes—yes," scarcely bestowing a glance on them; for the old gentleman, feeling himself the only responsible person in the house on this important occasion, was, for the first time in his life, on the verge of an aristocratic fuss. "Strange that we haven't heard from Hugh! The boy promised me that he would be here by to-day. Bless my soul, there he is!" and he went with quickened steps towards the door, and the sound of carriage-wheels was heard on the gravel.

Sibel turned first red, then deadly pale, and leant against the table. Was it with hope or fear that her heart was beating so wildly?

After all it was only Rose Forrester, escorted by Lord Windsor, in his mother's brougham.

She came into the room, in her pretty white dress, looking like a freshly-gathered rosebud. "Oh darling, you haven't gone to dress! I'm so glad," throwing her arms round Sibel's neck. "I thought I should be too late, because I waited such a time for Phil!"

"How charming you look!" holding her from her that she might study her dress. "Rose, you will cut out everyone else."

"Nonsense!" with a happy blush. "Now you must come and dress, and I'll help you."

"I've got to finish this wreath for the cake. I don't like that artificial one at all."

"Anything I can do to help?" and Lord Windsor stalked into the room, looking rather shy.

"You here?" exclaimed Sibel in intense surprise.

"Couldn't let Miss Forrester come alone. Hope I'm not in the way. Let me do that for you?" taking hold of the end of the wreath.

"Oh Sibel, dearest don't wait, I know you will be too late," exclaimed Rose in an agony of impatience.

"No hurry," said the Earl, coolly.

Rose ran out of the house, to see if she had dropped her lace-handkerchief in the hall, which left him one minute for private conversation. He took advantage of the opportunity at once: "I'm a believer in omens, so see what I've done," he said hurriedly. "Somebody has been mad enough to send a French marigold with these lilies. I've put it in, hidden away under a leaf, because it means misfortune."

"Why do you wish me evil?"

"I don't—Heaven knows," very earnestly; "but I'd give my head to stop this business to-day."

"I think I had better go," throwing down the flowers in a heap.

"One moment," laying his hand on her dress.

"Remember, whatever happens, Macdonald Forrester and I have tried to be your best friends."

"Oh! why isn't Hugh here!" with a pang of remembrance.

He leant towards her, with a decided wink. "Don't be too quick—and he's sure to come!"

She looked up at him with startled eyes. "Have you heard?"

He nodded, and at that moment Rose came into the room, followed by Mrs. Upperton, and carried her off.

"Here's a position for a fellow," soliloquised the Earl; "I get up an hour earlier than usual, on purpose to tell a girl that I'm her best friend, and all the thanks I get is a wish for somebody else! I wish I were out of it; but, hang it all, I'm not going to give in." Catching sight of Landon passing the door, he called him in, and asked him to help him with the infernal thing! Not that he was willing to give up the wreath which Sibel had entrusted to his care, but he had no more idea of making one, with an artistic arrangement of ferns and flowers, than a baby in its cradle. With Landon's assistance it was completed satisfactorily and arranged round the cake, and the valet at least contemplated it with much complacency. "Looks uncommonly well, my lord!"

"Oh, curse the whole thing! A wedding breakfast is the rottenest set-out in creation."

"Some time since you've had such a thing at the Court, my lord?" with a quiet smile.

"And it will be longer before we have another. Beastly cold day," with a frown at the dripping twigs outside.

"If your lordship would not mind stepping into the library"—throwing open the door, as he spoke, "there is some mulléd claret, which was provided on purpose!"

"Ah! good idea!" sauntering across the hall. "Jove, don't leave much room for a fellow's head," as a wreath of evergreen disarranged the half-inch of hair which fashion allowed him.

Mansor took possession of the Earl, whilst Landon hurried away to see after his master, and excited maids ran up and down stairs, as if in want of exercise. A quarter past eleven—twenty past five—and twenty. Lord Windsor lounged in an armchair, apparently engrossed in the *Field*; but his best edgèd-about the room, looking seriously annoyed, and despatched his valet for the third time, to see if the bride were not ready. At last there was a suspicious rustle on the stairs, and the Earl started up in a manner that showed his former phlegmatic behaviour was caused by anything rather than want of energy.

Lord Wentworth's gentle reproof died away on his lips, as the girl stood before him in all the glory of her youth—her own lovely face, with its aureole of soft brown curls, carrying the eye away from the splendour of veil and dress. The maids stood behind in an admiring circle, the men-servants ranged themselves on either side, and Rose looked up at Lord Windsor as if to challenge his admiration for her cousin. To her surprise his face changed, and became deadly pale. Stepping forward in sight of them all, he took her hand, and, bending very low, kissed it. "Whatever happens, may you be happy," he said in unsteady tones; then turning to Rose, he gave her his arm, saying, "we must be off first," and hurried her into the Court carriage.

Then the small neat brougham drove up to the door, and Lord Wentworth, with a whispered compliment, handed in the bride, and took his place beside her. Directly the bride had gone there was a stampede amongst the servants—the maids rushed off to get their bonnets, the men their hats and coats. The fly which had been ordered for Mrs. Upperton was late, and the worthy house-keeper nearly had a fit when she found there was small chance of getting to the church before the service began.

Meanwhile Major Lushington and his bride arrived in very good time, and the bridesmaids' brooches were adjusted in the vestry. They were much admired, and helped to pass a few minutes quite pleasantly.

"What can make Sibel so late?" said Lady Windsor for the twentieth time. She was dressed in violet velvet, trimmed with sable tails, and looked so young and charming that it was almost impossible to believe that the little Lady Alice Ponsonby, with that rope of fair hair reaching to her waist, was her grandchild.

The words had scarcely escaped her lips when her son's tall figure appeared in the doorway, with Rose, looking like a little fairy, by his side. They were immediately succeeded by Lord Wentworth, with the bride on his arm.

A smile of relief passed over Major Lushington's face as he caught sight of her. All sorts of horrible misgivings had come across his mind, on account of her long delay; but here she was, looking lovelier than any bride he ever looked before, and in a few short minutes she would be his! Why was it that at that most inopportune moment the face of Laura Delamere, with that last look of wild reproach, came before his eyes? He passed his hand across his forehead, as if to send the vision away, but still it stayed there like a phantom, destroying his peace at this hour of supreme happiness. He was so occupied with his own reflections that he did not notice the looks that were passed from one to the other. Rose couldn't see Phil, but what was still more important, Mrs. Shaw could not see her husband.

It now came out, upon inquiry, as the poor woman was nearly crying with vexation, that a fly had come to the Rectory at the o'clock that morning, with an earnest message to the Rev. Theodore Shaw, requesting him to come at once to Thornfield. Bishes to see Timothy Brown, who was lying at the point of death, and had set his heart on seeing the rector.

"Dear me, how very unfortunate!" said his wife; "fancy if you were late for the wedding!"

"Not a chance of it," answered her spouse. "They've had the good thought to send a fly in case our carriage should be out. I shall be back by eleven at the latest, and the ceremony is not till half-past."

Mrs. Shaw knew that her husband was a man to be trusted, so she put on her bonnet and drove down to the church in state, not doubting that Mr. Shaw would soon follow her. But as the time passed slowly, and the hand of the clock crept slowly round towards the fatal hour, she grew almost distracted. First she sent a messenger on foot—an expedient that was scarcely likely to be of much use—and then she sent the carriage, on the chance of the fly having broken down; then she found Lord Windsor, and confided to him the state of the case. He listened with the gravest concern, and to show his zeal, sent a mounted groom after the Rector's carriage, the foot-messenger, and the dilatory fly; then having reached the end of her resources, Mrs. Shaw sat down in a corner of the vestry, and had a fit of hysterics.

Major Lushington having resisted the temptation to take out his watch every second minute, as bridesgrooms are in the habit of doing, pulled it out at last, and found it had stopped. He looked round, caught the anxious expression on the faces opposite to him, and muttered to Captain Everard, "What the devil are they waiting for?"

"Jove, it's a squeak, but I suppose it's all right now."

"What's a squeak?" but his friend nudged his arm, as Sibel came up the aisle with Lord Wentworth. Everyone turned towards the altar, and many hearts beat fast, as there was a sound of carriage wheels and hurrying steps outside the church.

Then there was a breathless pause, and silence so deep that the ticking of individual watches could be heard distinctly—a footfall

on the tessellated pavement seemed to resound through the church, every head except the bride's turned back from the altar to the aisle, but it was only a tall, fair young man in a frock-coat, instead of a short clerical figure in a surplice, and there was a groan of disappointment.

"What could make you so late?" whispered Rose to her brother.

"Late, what do you mean?" trying to keep from panting, for he had no breath to speak of. "I bet I'm here before the parson."

As he spoke, twelve o'clock boomed out loud and clear through the solemn silence.

Major Lushington started, as if with an electric shock. "Good Heaven! it's too late!" and he turned to his bride with distracted eyes.

CHAPTER L.

IN THE ARMS OF THE ONE HE LOVED.

The faces of the wedding party would have been a study for an artist, as baffled, disappointed, and exasperated beyond measure Major Lushington led his bride—who by this time ought to have been his wife—down the aisle which he had trod but half-an-hour before with the calm satisfaction of one who knows that his dream is realized.

"Confound the man!" in a voice of suppressed passion. "I'll have his living taken from him; I'll strip him of everything he has!"

"Hush!" said Lord Wentworth, gently. "It must be some unfortunate accident."

"Accident! Then he ought to know better than to have an accident. If he chooses to go out he ought to leave a curate behind to take his place. It's the most infernal cheat I ever heard of."

Captain Everard touched him on the arm. "I don't care; I'll tell him so to his face."

By this time they had reached the church door, and somebody who had good eyes caught sight of the Rectory waggonette coming at a rapid pace down the hill.

Lord Windsor gave Phil a nudge, and the latter immediately stuffed his handkerchief into his mouth, then after another nudge pulled it out again, and assumed an expression of funeral gravity.

Almost before the carriage stopped the rector was out of it, and came hurrying up the churchyard with a purple face.

"Oh, Theodore!" exclaimed his wife, unable to restrain herself any longer; but her husband had no time to listen to her.

"Oh, Lord Wentworth!" wiping his forehead with his silk pocket-handkerchief, "the most dastardly trick has been played upon me!"

"I know it!" exclaimed Major Lushington, triumphantly, although he had failed to express this conviction before.

"A trick?" and the Viscount opened his eyes in amazement.

"Yes, a trick, and I mean to publish it far and wide. Such a thing has never happened before in this church; and I venture to say that no one can name a single instance, either at a baptism, a wedding, or a funeral when the rector was not in his place," drawing up his short figure with some dignity.

"What kept you to-day?" said Major Lushington, roughly; "That is the only point I care about."

"Shut the door," said Lady Windsor, "or we shall all catch our deaths of cold."

The door was shut with a heavy clasp, and the party stood huddled together at the bottom of the aisle, not thinking it worth while to retire into the vestry.

"I was kept a prisoner," said Mr. Shaw, crossing his hands one over the other at the top of his stick.

General surprise and consternation, followed by a shower of questions.

"Make it as short as you can," whispered Lord Wentworth, "for Miss Fitzgerald's sake."

"I will, my Lord. When I came out of

Timothy Brown's I got into the fly, deep in thought, and wondered why the coachman did not obey my orders to drive home as fast as he could. I put my head out of the window, and found there was a very good reason. He had gone, and taken the horse with him!

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Lord Wentworth, General Forrester, and Lady Windsor, whilst Major Lushington cried, excitedly, "Give me his name and he shall pay for it," and the Earl said, "Give me a clue and I'll hunt him up," and Phil, nearly exploding with laughter, offered to "break every bone in his body if he could only be found."

"This must be looked into," said Lord Wentworth, sternly. "But we must not keep Miss Fitzgerald waiting any longer. Major Lushington and Captain Everard, of course you will come to the Chestnuts; and my kind friends"—turning to Lady Windsor and the rest—"I hope we may meet again to-morrow at—shall we say eleven o'clock?"

"Do take me away," said Sibel in a whisper.

"Yes, dearest, in a moment. I think we had better say half-past ten," said Major Lushington, "and then if another accident should happen to Mr. Shaw we shall have time to send for a substitute."

"Not the slightest chance of it," said Lord Windsor; "but if you think it necessary and Mr. Shaw will allow me I'll mount guard on him myself."

"Thanks. Find out who has played me this infernal trick, and I shall be grateful."

"Come over to the Court this afternoon, and we'll make our inquiries together. Of course we shall be able to find him."

"I shall put it into the hands of the police," said Mr. Shaw, with decision.

"The police, sir, will make a muddle of the whole affair," put in the General, authoritatively.

"I have more faith in them than in any one else," and the angry cleric thought so himself, "I wonder if the old gentleman had anything to do with it. They say he hates the poor young thing."

"Oh, dear," sighed Mrs. Forrester, "have we got to go through it all again? I thought it would be the death of me this morning."

"Forrester, there's a good fellow," said Lord Wentworth, "just run and see what has become of the carriage. It's hard on this poor child to be kept here so long, with every one staring at her."

Phil was off like a shot, but before the brougham could drive up another carriage driven by four horses dashed up to the gate. The horses were covered with foam, as if speed had been the first object. A hand was on the handle of the door, as it whirled round the corner, scattering splashes of mud far and wide amongst the crowd, and a young man sprang out before it had fairly stopped. He steadied himself, and then ran up the path, followed by another and an older man at a slower pace. It was Hugh, his picturesque beauty set off by the far lining of his coat, his large eyes glowing with fearful anxiety. He came up the steps breathlessly, but as his glance fell on the group before him, and he saw Sibel in her bridal dress leaning on her bridesmaid's arm, he staggered back, turning deathly pale.

"Good Heaven, I am too late!"

"No, no! it's all right, old fellow," said Lord Windsor, grasping his arm.

"All right?" with a bewildered look from face to face.

"My dear boy, you are in time if you mean that," said Lord Wentworth, kindly, whilst Major Lushington drew himself up, like a brave man in the face of danger, and glared from the boy whom he hated to the man who could ruin him. "They are not to be married till to-morrow."

"To-morrow?" a glad light breaking over his face, "then I'm in time to save her. Sibel, I promised, you know I did!" holding out his hands to her.

But before she could take them he tattered forward and fell in a heap at her feet. In a moment she was on her knees beside him, holding up his heavy head, and calling wildly for "sai volatile." Somebody rushed off to the nearest public-house to get some brandy, a groom was despatched to the Chestnuts for the other, water was brought from the vestry and sprinkled on his face.

But nothing was of any use; those who watched him through their blinding tears knew that he was dying, and one there was who envied him, dying in all the prime of his youth and beauty in the arms of the girl he loved.

A spasm of pain crossed the white face, then the long, dark lashes were lifted, he looked into the lovely eyes bending so close to his. A beautiful smile played round his lips, and with a whisper, "Thank Heaven!" he was in the land of peace.

Peace to the troubled heart—peace to the generous mind—peace to the stainless soul—though friends might weep as those that would not be comforted, and his place on earth could in no wise be filled up. Heaven in its mercy had taken him early to its rest, and he died as few can die, without one regret to trouble his last moments.

CHAPTER LI.

HAROLD LUSHINGTON AT BAY.

SIBEL was saved, and Hugh Macdonald had not died in vain. The haste so fatal to himself had been her salvation, and there was no wedding ceremony in the church the next morning.

Mr. Springfield, General Forrester, Major Lushington, and Lord Wentworth, looking more dead than alive, were closeted in the study for an hour. It was the greatest proof of friendship that the old man could have given to Sibel, to put his grief aside and attend to other matters when his heart was nearly breaking for "his boy," but for Hugh's own sake, when he heard that he owed his death to the manner in which he had been rushing over Europe, in order to find the man who was to unmask the Major, he felt it his duty to exert himself to the uttermost in order that his generous efforts might not prove abortive. Therefore he sat patiently listening whilst Cyrus Springfield unfolded the ugly story of his wife's wrongs.

"Believe me, gentlemen!" he said, gravely, "it is through no wish of my own that I am here. But that young gentleman so worked upon my feelings that I could not help it, and he dragged me over here helter-skelter, all the way from Cairo, for fear lest you should not believe the story without me to confirm it."

"Put it down to charity if you like!" said the Major, scornfully. "I call it by another name."

"Major Lushington, if you will be kind enough to restrain all remarks until Mr. Springfield has ended, we shall be much obliged to you," said Lord Wentworth, wearily.

"Let him tell as many lies as he likes, I won't interrupt him!" holding his arms defiantly.

"We have not come to hear lies, but the truth," put in the general, severely.

"I need not say that that is what I have come to tell you. The facts that I am going to mention came to my ears through the agency of a man whose heart Major Lushington had done his best to break. The name of Laura Delamere is familiar to you—" the Viscount bent his white head—"Laura Delamere was that man's wife!" with a wave of his hand towards the place where Lushington was standing, as he leant against the book-case. Lord Wentworth started, the General frowned.

"In the year 18—she was the merriest, light-hearted girl in the world—engaged to her cousin, Sydney Alston. Lushington met her in the opera-house at Florence; he fell in love with her at first sight, and with his cursed beauty had no difficulty in winning his way into her innocent heart—and it was innocent then

gentlemen, as innocent as a daisy. He persuaded her to run away with him, and they were married at Florence. The parents were in a fine state, for they knew all about their son-in-law; but whilst they were cursing and swearing, Lushington went off to India and took his bride with him. When there he had her completely in his hands, for she had not a single friend or relation in the country, and he knew he could do as he liked. Then this man, who calls himself a gentleman, told her that there was a flaw in the marriage; and she was no wife of his. As a British subject, he was bound to have it celebrated under the British flag at the Embassy—

"Pon my soul and honour, Lord Wentworth!" broke in Major Lushington, excitedly, "I had no idea of this at the time!"

"I did not say you had!" said Mr. Springfield, coldly. "You have sinned enough on your head—there is no need to add to them. Then and there, in the face of Calcutta, he cast her off, in order the better to carry on an intrigue with a Mrs. Gordon—wife of a banker. The wrong story got abroad; the man was received with open arms, the woman was scouted. He offered her money, but I think you will understand why she did not accept it—I should have taken it myself in her place; but she was proud, and her spirit was not broken. Alston followed her to India, and found her starving in a garret—absolutely starving—with half-a-pound of rice and a drop of water, and nothing else. He brought her back to England, and they made a scandal out of that—when he would have given his eyes to marry her, but that he was dying of consumption. When he died, he left her all his money, and on that she lived till I married her." He stopped and cleared his throat. He was a cold man; but he could not tell the story of his wife's wrongs and remain unmoved.

"After several years, Major Lushington came back to England, and then, not content with having ruined her life already, he tried to do it again. She was cold to him at first, but"—his voice growing thick—"he always had his way with women, and she was like the rest. I need not go into that. We had many quarrels about him, and he made our home a place of torture. I had my business to think of, and I found I couldn't get on with the constant worry. I dare say there were faults on my side. I am naturally cold, and she was hot—as hot as fire. She went her way and I went mine, and we never met again till I found her dead at Thornfield, where she had gone to meet him!"

As he ended, he wiped his forehead and sat down. There was a pause, after which Lord Wentworth asked if Mr. Springfield could afford them proofs of his assertion, upon which the merchant immediately produced a bulky pocket-book, from which he took several papers, and laid them on the table. They were carefully scanned; the one which excited most attention being an attested copy of the marriage certificate from the register of the church at Florence. Amongst them were letters of Major Lushington's to the unfortunate lady, which fully bore out the truth of the story. When he had finished the perusal, Lord Wentworth conferred in an undertone with General Forrester, and then turned coldly to the artilleryman.

"Have you anything to say in contradiction of these statements?"

Major Lushington raised his head, and stood bolt upright, his face pale, but his eyes flashing. There was no sign of flinching in his bearing which told to a certain extent in his favour; and if he had had to be tried by a jury of women they would have taken note of his aristocratic appearance, and contrasted it favourably with the plebeian exterior of the tall-merchant; but there were no women in the study, or else Harold Lushington might have met with a different verdict.

"I have never pretended to be a saint, as General Forrester can testify, but I am not such a sinner as that man makes me out. The woman is dead, and I hate to say a word

against her; but she had a deuce of a temper, and I couldn't live with her. I should have been in a madhouse before the end of a year. That being the case, I thought it best to part as Mr. Springfield did, by his own confession later on, but unlike him I did not ill-use her first. I offered her half my private fortune, which was not much; and if she would not have it, but chose to hide herself and starve, was that my fault? When I came back to England I found her rich, but miserable; and if she came to me, and showed me the bruises on her arm, which her brute of a husband had given her, what man of flesh and blood could stand it? Remember, she loved me, and she hated him."

"That is your crime, so make no boast of it!" said Lord Wentworth, sternly. "It is useless to appeal to your sense of morality, for you have none. You win this poor girl's love, decoy her into a false marriage—and cast her off—and then you call yourself a gentleman!"

"I should have married her again if it had not been for her temper; but under the circumstances it would have been the act of a fool!"

"For myself, I would rather be a fool than a scoundrel!" very quietly.

Major Lushington flushed. "You are hard on me—I am not here to be insulted!"

"A man is in a difficult position when the truth becomes an insult. It appears to me, General, that there is no use in prolonging this painful discussion. We have heard sufficient to show us that this—this—Major Lushington is no fit husband for your ward, so that we have nothing more to do than to request him to leave the house at his earliest convenience," rising from his seat as he spoke, "and to thank Mr. Springfield for the trouble he has taken on Miss Fitzgerald's behalf!"

"I quite agree with you!" said the General, gruffly. "I never knew such an unprincipled scoundrel in my life!"

"Hold! I may have been a scoundrel, Heaven knows; but I swear by every hope in life, that if you will only trust me with her—" his lips working with intense agitation—"I—I will be a better man for the future!"

"After what we have heard!" began the General—

"That is my past—you have nothing to do with it! My future concerns you, and for Heaven's sake believe me—"

"Major Lushington," said Lord Wentworth, drawing himself up, "will you force me to ask you a second time to leave my house?"

Then, knowing that there was no hope, Harold Lushington, with his head in the air, and a curse on his lips, stalked out of the room.

He looked back, and stood still on the sodden gravel of the drive; every twig was dripping with melting snow, and the blind of every window was drawn down. The shadow of death was on the house, and the spirit of mourning seemed to pervade the atmosphere. He looked up at the window which he knew to be Sibel's, and stretched out his hands in wild unavailing regret. "Never again—oh, Heaven! never again," never to touch her soft little hand—never to look into her sweet shy eyes, never to watch the blush creeping so deliciously over the rounded cheek, or to feel her soft breath on his own.

The tears rushed into his eyes, but he dashed them indignantly away, as a step came down the drive, and he recognised his enemy. He drew himself up, and squared his shoulders, waited till Springfield was exactly in line, then with the whole weight of his body thrown into his arm, delivered a blow on his left temple. The blow would have felled an ordinary-sized man, but the tall merchant was strong as an ox. Being taken at unawares, he nearly lost his balance; but recovering himself quickly, lifted his cane. Lushington was too quick for him; he caught it in his left hand, and broke it in two. Then he seized him savagely by the tie round his throat, and tried to trip him up at the same time. The two men swayed backwards and forwards, Lushington still maintaining his grip on the other man's neck,

till he gasped out: "Do you want to throttle me?" The road, the evergreens and the sky, danced before his eyes. The veins on his forehead swelled almost to bursting, and he stumbled over his hat. With that stumble he went down, and Lushington, panting for breath, stood over him and gave him a contemptuous kick. "Lie there, you cold-blooded hound! I feel better now old scores are wiped out, and we are quits!"

Then he walked away in the gathering twilight, laughing to himself at every curse that pursued him down the carriage-drive, defiant of the future, reckless of the present, and with no fear either of Heaven or man in his stormy heart.

(To be continued.)

FALSEHOOD.—If falsehood had, like truth, but one face only, we should be upon better terms, for we should then take the contrary to what the liar says for certain truth; but the reverse of truth has a hundred figures and a field indefinite without bound or limit.

COURTSHIP AMONG THE ARABS.

THE girls have little to do with selecting their husbands. The men nearly always fix that up among themselves.

A bold warrior sees a girl whom he loves in another tribe. He rides up at night, finds out where she is sleeping, dashes up to her tent, snatches her up in his arms, puts her before him on the horse, and sweeps away like the wind. If he happens to be caught, he is shot. If he is not, the tribe from which he has stolen the girl pays him a visit in a few days.

The Dervish, a priest of the tribe, joins the hands of the young man and the girl, and both tribes join in the merriment.

All the bravest men steal their wives, but there are some who do not. Their method is a little different.

Of a calm, moonlight night—and a moonlight night in the tropics is far more beautiful than here—you may see an Arab sitting before the tent of his innamorata, picking a stringed instrument something like our banjo, and singing a song of his own composition. This is his courtship. They are the most musical people in the world. They talk in poetry, and extemporization is as easy with them as it was with the Scalds of old.

The courtship only lasts a week or two. If the girl is obstinate, he goes elsewhere and seeks to win another girl by the power of his songs and music.

Sometimes the fathers make up the match, but always the girl is the obedient slave. Her religion, her people, her natural instincts, the traditions of her ancestors, all teach her to be the slave of her husband.

The power of life and death is in his hands, and she bows before his opinions with the most implicit obedience. It is only when the fair-faced Frank comes, with his glib talk of woman's highest duties and grander sphere, with his winning manner, with his marked respect, so flattering to a woman's soul, that she leaves her husband, forsakes the teachings of her childhood, gives up home and friends, and risks death itself to repose in his arms. They are as fine riders as the men, and as fearless. They ride like men, and can go almost any distance without fatigue. They are fine shots, and don't know what personal fear is. The women of these people are modest, and far more faithful than the women of civil life. Indeed, it is the rarest thing in the world to hear of conjugal infidelity.

A woman mature at eleven and twelve, and as old at thirty-five. When young they are very beautiful. They have soft, dark skin, black, flowing hair, and soft, languishing eyes. They are passionate in their loves, but after marriage all their affection is centred in their husbands. If a woman is found to be untrue to her husband she is instantly killed, together with her lover. But this seldom happens.

BY A LITTLE GRAVE.

TWENTY years the grass has grown
Round this little grave's white stone;
Twenty years, and yet to me
Yesterday it seems to be,
Or an hour or two ago—
Strange how memory makes it so!—
That the child whose grave you see
Lived, and laughed, and talked with me.

Strange indeed! My thoughts go back
Down the old, well-beaten track
Of the years since now and then,
And I have my child again.
I can close my eyes, and he
Comes to laugh and romp with me;
I can hear the music sweet
Of my baby's voice and feet.

Strange, so strange! You would suppose
That each year that comes and goes,
Would between my child and me
Heap dead leaves of memory,
Till at last I thought of him
As a dream; as vague and dim
Many a thing of old appears,
Covered with the dust of years.

Ah, not so! The years that fled
Cannot make my baby dead.
He is mine to love and kiss—
Was, say you? No, no! He is!
Mine the same as when he lay
On my breast, that Summer day
When they say he died. But I
Tell you he can never die! L. B. S.

THE MYSTERY OF ALANDYKE.

CHAPTER IX.

SIR JOCELYN LEIGH seemed strangely irritable and preoccupied on that cold, bleak, March evening when he had parted with Nell. When he had sent the little governess to her schoolroom with the cruel news that she was to leave his house he went into the library, and stood for a moment looking out upon the fair prospect revealed from the windows. Alandyke in all its beauty lay stretched before him, the well-timbered park, the velvet lawns, the broad acres, which were all his own; he looked at them, and then turned away with a sigh.

"They were both false," he muttered to himself. "I begin to think all women are false; but Berta at least sinned for her children, and this girl—"

He broke off abruptly; however harsh his judgment of little Nell might be, a vision would rise up before him of her sitting in her chair upstairs with his children clinging to her. After all she was poor and penniless; Guy was a handsome, fascinating fellow, some day he would be an English peer. It must have been a rare temptation for the little governess.

"It is his fault more than hers," muttered Sir Jocelyn. "I declare but for Isabel's sake I'd send him away to-night. Poor Belle, things look black for her, but I suppose I'd better let the engagement go on. She has been Guy's future wife even since she could remember; it'd break her heart to lose him."

A pang did come to him as he thought of the lonely girl upstairs, who had lost not only Guy, but her home and means of living. He smothered a sigh, and went out to the hall in time to receive his sister and the little girls.

"Hortensia, I want to speak to you."

Lady Daryl, a little mystified, followed him to the library, Adela and Mab remaining outside.

"Wait there," said Sir Jocelyn, a little crossly.

"Mightn't we go upstairs to Miss Stuart; her head must be better now, papa?"

"Wait there," returned Sir Jocelyn, "your aunt will not be long."

"What is the matter?" said his sister-in-law, lightly. "What makes you so cross?"

"I am not cross. I have been seriously annoyed."

"How?"

He hesitated.

"I rarely interfere with any of your arrangements, Hortensia, but I do not consider Miss Stuart a fit instructress for the children, and so I have told her. She leaves Alandyke to-morrow, and in the meantime it is my desire she should not see Adela or Mab; you had better tell their nurse so. Women manage these things best."

He was going, but his sister-in-law put one hand on his arm to detain him.

"Jocelyn, I think you are beside yourself."

"I trust not."

"What fault can you find with Miss Stuart? To me she seems a governess just suited to us."

"In talents, perhaps, but there are other things beside mere learning, Hortensia. I do not consider her a fit companion for your sister's children."

Lady Daryl was a very obstinate woman; she had not cared much about Nell, but still Nell was her protégée and had saved her a lot of trouble. She did not appreciate the prospect of going to London to find another governess; besides, it was a slight to her that her brother-in-law should find fault with her selection.

"What has she done?"

"I should prefer not to tell you."

"But I wish to know, in justice to the girl."

"She is a shocking flirt."

Lady Daryl laughed.

"Do you mean she has been setting her cap at you, Jocelyn?"

"I mean nothing of the kind."

"Well"—and the lady flashed a laugh at him from her dark eyes—"I must say you have surprised me. I have seen one or two of our guests ready to pay Miss Stuart attention, and I liked the quiet way in which she repelled their compliments. Well of course she must go, as you wish it; it's your house, not mine, only next time you want a governess I must beg you to select one for yourself."

"And you will explain to the nurse?"

"I suppose I must."

Sir Jocelyn kept the children with him while he supposed the explanation to be going on; he even promoted them to the dignity of making tea for him in the library, but they were restless and uneasy.

"Hadm't we better just go up and tell Miss Stuart?" suggested Mab. "It's not kind to let her have her tea all by herself when she's got a headache."

"You had better stay here with me; she won't want to be bothered if she's ill."

"We never bother her," returned the children in great indignation. "Never!"

They had their tea, and Sir Jocelyn took them upstairs to the nursery one in each hand. The nurse thought how seldom he came there. She curtsied respectfully as she answered his questions, but she let him see that she totally disapproved of his conduct.

"The children seem well, nurse?"

"Miss Leigh and Miss Mabel were never better in their lives, Sir Jocelyn," returned Nurse, primly; "and I'm sure they ought to be happy and contented, seeing Miss Stuart devotes herself to them as if she were their mother."

The baronet went downstairs, and the first person he encountered was Guy Vernon. Sir Jocelyn's stately head was held a little higher, and he was moving on when his guest stopped him.

"I hope you did not think anything of that—that meeting this afternoon," he began, awkwardly. "I should be sorry to believe it influenced you in any way against Miss Stuart."

Sir Jocelyn faced round on him.

"I do not desire to speak of it."

"But—"

"I repeat I wish no allusion made to this afternoon's events. If you are going to marry my niece, and I am to receive you from time to time as Isabel's husband, I must forget the disgraceful part you acted this afternoon."

"Strong language, Leigh."

"Not too strong. I don't blame you only, but, at least, you are old enough to have known better."

Rather relieved in his cowardly nature that the blame was on Nell's shoulders more than his, Guy entered the drawing-room. He knew now that he had failed in his attempt to gratify passion and ambition at once. Little Nell, with her bright-coloured hair and soft grey eyes was lost to him. The only creature he had really loved had escaped his pursuit; there remained to him the advantage of a wealthy marriage.

"I suppose it's really fortunate," he thought as he went up to Lady Daryl to compliment her on her return from her drive. "I couldn't have married her really, and if ever she discovered the true nature of the ceremony I proposed she'd just have broken her heart. The connection would have been a stumbling block to my career—something I must have kept secret always from Isabel. Everyone would tell me I am well out of it, and yet—"

He did not pursue the train of thought further, he could not. Before him rose up the memory of the sweet childish face as he had seen it first, then came the thought of that face, wan and white, as he had parted from it at Loughborough Railway Station. Nell was changed now from both these visions of herself. Her love for him had died out of her heart, killed by his own act and deed. It was well for him that it was so, and yet such are the inconsistencies of our nature, as he sat in that brilliantly-lighted drawing-room among the throng of noble guests, he knew that in spite of Isabel's beauty and the wealth his union with her would bring him, he should have been happier had he kept faithful to his own heart. He would have been glad if he could have turned back the hand of time to the dull winter's night when in that deserted waiting-room he spoke the cruel words which robbed him of Nell's love.

"She will marry," he thought, suddenly. "All men are not such scoundrels as I have been; she will find one to whom her sweet face will seem better than gold. Oh, little Nell, I have done my best to trouble you. I have tried hard to destroy your peace and blight your life, and I loved you. Oh, my darling! I loved you well, better far than I thought when I wooed you in the winter evenings long ago."

"Have you a headache, Guy?" His pretty fiancée asked the question; she had come up unperceived, and stood standing at his side.

"No"—rousing himself by an effort—

"what made you think so, Belle?"

"I don't know; you look bored, perhaps that's it."

"As if I could be bored when you are here."

The girl laughed.

"Don't trouble to pay me compliments, Guy. We have known each other too long for that. We have always been good friends, Guy."

It was a strange speech to make to the man who was so soon to be her husband.

"Always!"

"Because we haven't bothered each other. We have each gone our own way, and let the elders do all the worrying and arranging for us. Guy, I want to ask you something."

Guy Vernon devoutly hoped it was not about his occupation that afternoon.

"Ask away, Belle."

"You won't be angry?"

"I am never angry with you, Belle."

Her face softened, and she looked straight into his eyes as she said,—

"I want to know whether you would have married me if the elders had not settled it almost as soon as I was born? If we had just grown up together as cousins should you have wanted to marry me of your own accord?"

He wondered if she was turning jealous and hoped not; if she expected him to make love to her she would be disappointed.

"Of course I should have wanted to marry you, Belle. Isn't that generally a man's desire when he loves a woman?"

"And you love me?"

"My dear girl, isn't it rather late in the day for you to ask that question? Of course I love you, Belle, and I am counting the days impatiently until you will be all my own—until nothing but death shall have power to part you and me."

She shivered as he spoke; she wore a soft, flowing dress of pink silk with silver ornaments. It was not cold; for the drawing-room was warmed by a large wood fire, but Isabel Vernon certainly shivered as her lover spoke of the time when nothing but death should be able to part them.

"And you never loved anyone else?" she persisted. "I have never had a rival in your affections? Guy, I could not bear a rival in my husband's heart. I must have all or nothing."

He wondered at her mood, but he never hesitated; he played his rôle well. Guy Vernon, with his handsome face and low, wooing voice made an adept at deceiving her.

His whole heart was aching for the girl who had escaped him. He knew quite well no other woman could fill her place, but Isabel was rich, her aspirations must be lulled to rest. What mattered a few extra truths to him? He had enough already on his conscience.

"I never loved anyone as I love you, Belle," he answered, firmly. "How could I? My heart has always been in your keeping, and it is not likely to wander now. I can't think what has made you think of such a thing?"

"I will tell you some day."

He was called away by Lady Daryl, and Isabel, sinking into a chair, raised a painted screen as though to protect her face from the fire. It was not the fire which had flushed her cheeks, but downright honest indignation. That afternoon she had resolved upon her own course. She meant that day to be the very last of her engagement to her cousin, but as a snave for her conscience, perhaps to allay the honourable scruples of the man she loved, she resolved first to give Guy an opportunity of confessing his deceit.

She still had in her possession the short passionate letter in which he had pleaded to his father for sanction to marry the woman of his choice. That letter was not four months old, and yet he looked into her face and swore she was his only love.

Any remorse Belle might have felt for the act she was contemplating—any pity she might have had for her cousin's disappointment—died at the moment he looked into her face and lied to her. A woman will never pardon a man for thinking he has deceived her.

There were many guests at Alandyke that evening, and so Isabel went in to dinner on Harold Yorke's arm. It had never happened so before; usually the heiress and her fiancé were paired off together. To-night pretty Mrs. Rousier fell to Guy; we cannot say what part Belle had in the selection of her partner. They found time for a few words as they passed down the grand staircase, and considering these two avoided each other steadily, and were never known to converse if they could help it, the words they spoke on this occasion were rather odd.

Her little hand lay confidently on his arm; he just touched it with his gloved finger and asked in a voice of suppressed emotion,—

"Whose?"

"Yours."

"You are quite sure?"

"Positive? If you ask me so often I shall think you do not want it."

Their eyes met, they understood each other. Then Isabel said, as though answering his look,—

"You need not think of him, nothing in the world would make me do that even if you were a hundred miles away."

"Which I shall be by to-morrow."

She flashed a question.

"Yes," went on the young artist; "I have made every arrangement. I have told Lady Daryl I leave by the night train from Wharton. I shall catch the 1.30 express from York."

"Doesn't Lady Daryl think your movements peculiar?"

"Very. She was good enough to tell me that in the three weeks I had been here I had been in London three times. She seems impressed with my extravagance, and even read me a little lecture on prudence."

"And you?"

"I told her the journeys were necessary."

"Harold?"

"Well, they were to me. She was very gracious, said I must come down again for the shooting."

They had reached the dining-room now and were taking their seats; further conversation was impossible except on general topics. People said afterwards that was an uncomfortable dinner. The host looked moody and abstracted; Guy Vernon's spirits were not as gay as usual, while the Earl of Carruthers, usually the life of the party, hardly spoke at all, and was distinctly heard by Lady Daryl to mutter under his breath such soliloquies as "A burning shame!"—"should like to tell him so,"—"would never have believed it," and others of a like nature.

Mr. Yorke's departure was openly discussed; the young artist frankly observed he preferred night travelling, and, besides, had a very special appointment in London next day. By leaving Alandyke about ten he would catch the evening train to York, and thence proceed by express to London.

"You'll go from Wharton, of course?"

For since Nell's arrival at Alandyke a great honour had been bestowed upon the neighbourhood in the opening of a new station named after Sir Jocelyn's estate. The venture hardly succeeded as much as had been expected; it was a very small and comfortable wooden building, without even a waiting-room. The trains hardly stopped a minute, although conducting it beneath their dignity to stop at all, and the booking-office clerk, who combined the functions of station-master, porter, and ticket issuer and collector, had the peculiar knack of never being found when he was wanted.

Consequently "Alandyke" was used chiefly by local passengers—villagers going in to the next town for market, or such humble folk as did not boast a conveyance, and were grateful to be spared the long walk to Wharton. People of a higher grade, like Sir Jocelyn or his guests, invariably preferred to drive on to the more important station, secure a comfortable seat, see that a footwarmer was at their disposal (a luxury unprocureable at Alandyke), &c., so that no one was surprised when Mr. Yorke answered, lightly,—

"Oh, yes, I don't like Alandyke, it's nothing but a cattle shed. In fact, I think it's rather an insult to Sir Jocelyn to have called it after the Park."

The ladies retired to the drawing-room. Belle went gently up to Lady Daryl.

"I feel so tired," she said, in a low voice. "I don't think I am quite well. I was up very late last night, so if you don't mind I will go to bed."

Lady Daryl looked at her uneasily; she did not want the bride-elect to be laid up before her wedding day. She noticed that Isabel's cheeks were flushed, and her eyes rather brighter than usual, the little hand which touched hers was burning hot.

"I think it will be the wisest thing you can do," she said, kindly, "you may get up much better to-morrow."

"I will have a long rest; don't expect me down to breakfast—and please say good-bye to Mr. Yorke for me."

"I am glad you remembered that. Any message to Guy?"

Belle shook her head.

"We had a long talk together just before dinner, he won't miss me; good-night."

Lady Daryl wondered why the girl raised her face to be kissed. She wondered, too, why Isabel's bright eyes travelled round the room as though to impress its every detail on her memory. She hoped this was not going to be very ill; she had enjoyed such perfect health all her life it would be very awkward if it failed her now. An invalid wife was such a drawback to a young man, and then Lady Daryl's thoughts went to her little niece and their father's whim about Miss Stuart; she never remembered Isabel's indisposition (but about an hour later, she gave her message to Harold Yorke).

The young artist's adieu did not take long. A general favourite with the whole circle, he was yet the special friend of none. Sir Jocelyn shook hands with him, and told him he would always be a welcome guest. Lady Daryl endorsed this warmly; pretty Mrs. Rousier smiled bewitchingly, as she gave him her hand; and Guy Vernon, who had come out of the reading-room on purpose to bid the artist farewell, wondered if it were an intentional slight, or merely an oversight, that Harold Yorke never gave him a chance of shaking hands.

The dog-cart came round to drive the guests to Wharton. Sir Jocelyn had offered his company, and so had one or two others, but they were laughingly assured it was far too late and too cold to drag them out, and that the artist couldn't think of being such a nuisance to them.

As the baronet stood on the steps watching Mr. Yorke spring lightly into the dog cart, the bitter north-east wind blew straight in his face.

"I am glad she has not gone to-night," he thought to himself. "Poor child, a journey in this bitter weather would have been cruel work, but I don't like the job of speaking to her to-morrow. I wish Hortensia would take it off my hands?"

Hortensia had no idea of dog-cart.

"That's a nice young fellow," said General Carruthers, when they were back in the drawing-room. "I should like to do something for him; you say he's poor as a church mouse." They really couldn't help it, the others were laughing, but the General had spoken in all simplicity of good will.

"I don't think Yorke needs money," said Sir Jocelyn slowly; "he is sure to make his way in the world; he is one of my special favourites. If Adela or Mab were a few years older I believe I should cover him for a son-in-law."

"Don't talk of sons-in-law," said pretty Mrs. Rousier, with a pout; "it makes you sound so dreadfully venerable."

He answered her with a half-sigh.

"I am getting into middle-age, little more than three years and I shall be forty."

"Nonsense!" said the lady, though she had believed him older.

"You have lived long enough to be sensible," said Lord Carruthers slowly; "to be sensible, and have conquered old absurd prejudices."

"I don't think I'm a man of many prejudices," remonstrated Sir Jocelyn, driven to defend himself. "Which one were you alluding to?"

But Lord Carruthers had no mind to tell him, and somehow the departure of the young artist having engendered a certain flatness, as the departure of one from a large circle so often does, though it still waited a few minutes to eleven, there was a general move to go to bed; and very soon the grand drawing-room was deserted. Before midnight gentle sleep had taken into her kind keeping most of the weary brains of Sir Jocelyn's household.

Most, but not all. The master of that fair home made no attempt to seek repose; he

threw himself wearily into a chair in his dressing-room, and tried to summon up his energies and decide what sentence he would pronounce on that dire-offender, Miss Stuart, on the morrow.

She must leave Alandyke at once; he never faltered in that. Belle's happiness seemed to demand that her lover should not be exposed to the trial of such fascinations, but Sir Jocelyn's heart yearned towards the lonely, helpless, little creature he was going to send back to a poverty-stricken home, and he was wondering whether, when Guy Vernon and his bride had safely departed, Nell could not return to the Alandyke school-room.

"It would be a lesson to her," he muttered; "she would never do it again, and yet with that face how can she help flirting? And I thought her so pure and innocent, fool that I was. But for my miserable secret, I might have told her so, might have asked her to stay home, and be the children's mother." "Well, I am rightly punished for my folly. What business have I to think of such things, when every year the millstone round my neck grows heavier. Oh! Berta, Berta!" he moaned in his anguish, "how could you do it, how could you leave me such a miserable secret? She sinned for the children's sakes, and that awful half-witted foster-mother sinned for hers; but between them they have blighted my life, and cast a shadow over the children's. 'It is cruel to me, but it is doubly cruel to them, poor little things. Brought up here in luxury, how can they help thinking themselves children of the soil? How, as years go by, can my utmost efforts prevent poor Adela being called heiress of Alandyke? The boy went, even in my misery I can be thankful for that. If Berta had left me a son the implication would have been a hundred times more intolerable.'"

He paced up and down the room until he was weary. Midnight struck and he never heeded it. Then a cautious footfall sounded, and his valet entered, the very Andrew who only that morning had told Miss Stuart he was the cause of her terrified swoon just four-and-twenty hours before.

"It is very late, Sir Jocelyn."

"I am not ready yet, you can go. I do not want you."

But Andrew had no intention of going.

"You were up very late last night, Sir Jocelyn; it must have been nearly two before you were in your own room."

"Really?"

A strange light came into the baronet's eyes; his eyes looked a question to the faithful servant, who knew a little, though not all, of his terrible burden.

"Yes, Sir Jocelyn," replying to the look just as though it had been a spoken question, "yes, you did. I hadn't expected it last night and so I wasn't there—more shame for me."

"Don't blame yourself, Andrew, it's not your fault."

The valet came closer to him and with a strange gravity humbly implored,—

"If you would but give it up, Sir Jocelyn! If you would but give it up. For months and years you have been at it till you're aged like an old man. Oh! my master! my dear master! don't be angry with me for speaking, but give it up just for my lady's sake that's dead and gone and her little children's."

Sir Jocelyn shuddered.

"You don't understand, Andrew."

"No sir, not at all. I'm only a poor, ignorant servant, and you're a scholar, but I understand this—this thing can't go on, it's killing you, just as though you knocked a nail into your coffin every time you do it."

"I would give it up if I could!"—oh, how weary, how hopeless his voice sounded! "but it is for the children's sakes. You don't know—you can't guess all that hangs on it."

Andrew hesitated.

"Then, sir, if it's got to be done, why not let someone else do it?—someone for whom it wouldn't have the misery and memory it has for you?"

"No one else could do it."

"And it's not only that, Sir Jocelyn," went on the faithful retainer, "but it causes strange reports to be spread; it's giving an ill-name to that part of Alandyke."

The baronet smiled scornfully.

"Pooh! servants would believe anything."

"It's not servants, Sir Jocelyn, there's that young lady from London, she was there last night."

"She had no business to be there."

His eyes gleamed cruelly; he was wondering whether Helen had been retreating from a meeting with her lover when she was so strangely interrupted.

"She was there, Sir Jocelyn. I fetched the housekeeper to her—she had fainted dead away, poor young thing, and a hard job we had to bring her to."

"It's no use, Andrew. Do you think I wouldn't be glad to forget, to give it up? Why I feel another creature away from here. If it was only pleasure, dearly as I love the place, I'd shut up Alandyke and go abroad with the little girls."

"I wish you would. Oh, sir, I wish you would."

"But I can't."

"Or if you'd have that room changed, make it a guest-room or anything. How are you to forget my lady, sir? How are you to be happy again while night after night you—"

Sir Jocelyn put one hand to his head as though in pain. Andrew's words had struck home and filled him with a new remorse.

Forget his wife! The old servant thought then he was mourning her still, and in his own heart of hearts he knew that he had never mourned her in that way. That years before her death he had been how imperfect had been their union, how incapable she had been of appreciating and understanding the better, nobler parts of his nature. He mourned for the awful legacy she had left him. The secret she had bequeathed him blighted his life and robbed him of all peace, but for herself he had no regret.

She was his children's mother—as such he must respect her memory, but he had never loved her as he loved that fair-haired girl he thought sleeping peacefully not many yards away. He had never grieved when he lost Berta, as he grieved now over the loss of his faith in Nell.

"You had better leave me, Andrew. I can't go to bed; I shall sleep best here!"

The old servant said nothing; he retired to his master's bedroom, there to keep his watch until Sir Jocelyn's mood changed. An hour later he opened the door and found his master asleep. He closed it again noiselessly, and returned to his vigil.

"What can possess him?" pondered poor Andrew. "Lady Alberta never seemed the whole world to him when she was alive, and the five years she has been dead he lives on her memory. Night after night, after the house has got quiet, he goes down to her boudoir. Now and then he's awake, but for the most part I believe he goes in his sleep. The very room is forbidden to be opened; he wouldn't let her own sister go into it, but he spends whole hours there. I can't make it out; only I'm sure it'll kill him if it goes on. If there was only someone for me to speak to; but Lady Daryl'd be no good, she'd not understand—she might say he was mad. Sir Jocelyn's not mad yet, thank Heaven; but there's no telling he mayn't be it things go on."

Step, step, step, slow and determined, with that peculiar deliberation which all know is a peculiarity of the sleep-walker. Instantly Andrew opened the door of communication, and saw his master leaving the dressing-room, bearing a small silver lamp in one hand and a large peculiarly shaped key in the other. Andrew was pretty well accustomed to these midnight expeditions now; but still they made his flesh creep.

In perfect silence he followed the baronet, stepping softly, so that the sound of his footfall should not awake the sleeper. On and on,

down the long corridors, until they came to the door of what had been the Lady Alberta's boudoir.

All through her illness this had been her favourite sitting-room. She had never voluntarily left it for any other. Her husband had insisted on the apartment being left precisely as it had been whilst she was alive, and therefore it was freight with recollections of her; and as the valet often declared to himself as long as that room was there it was impossible Sir Jocelyn could forget his wife.

The sleep-walker put the key in the lock, turned it mechanically and entered. Poor Andrew followed, standing like a sentinel in the entrance, while his master deposited the lamp on a small oval table and sat down.

No one without a hard heart could have gazed on that scene unmoved. The rose-satin covered couch was drawn near the fireplace, where the ashes and cinders yet lingered in the grate—the very fur rug which had covered the invalid the last day of her life hung over the sofa, and her work-basket, with some pretty articles of childish design, was on the table just as she had put it down.

The servants never being allowed access, the dust of five years had gathered thick upon the walls and furniture; cobwebs hung from the ceiling; there was a weird desolation about the whole; but Sir Jocelyn never noticed it. He went towards a pretty writing-table which stood in the octagon window, as done before it, and, asleep though he was, mechanically unlocked the drawer nearest to him, opened it and took out the contents, letters, receipted bills, old ball programmes, cuttings from newspapers, extracts from favourite books. Sir Jocelyn looked at each and returned it to its place. He secured each drawer—there were nine of them—and its contents in the same way. Then he rose with the patient air of dejection, which had grown so painfully familiar to his old servant, and went to his wife's desk, then to her work-table. He treated these just as he had done the writing-table. For five years he had had this mania—as it seemed on him—for five years, whenever he had been at Alandyke, Andrew had been prepared for this nocturnal search. It was not every night, sometimes weeks would elapse without a visit; but the devoted valet never felt safe from its recurrence, and time had no effect in lessening the baronet's delusion, if it was one. This particular stay at Alandyke he had been to the boudoir almost every night—the first time in his sober waking senses, the others were under the influence of somnambulism.

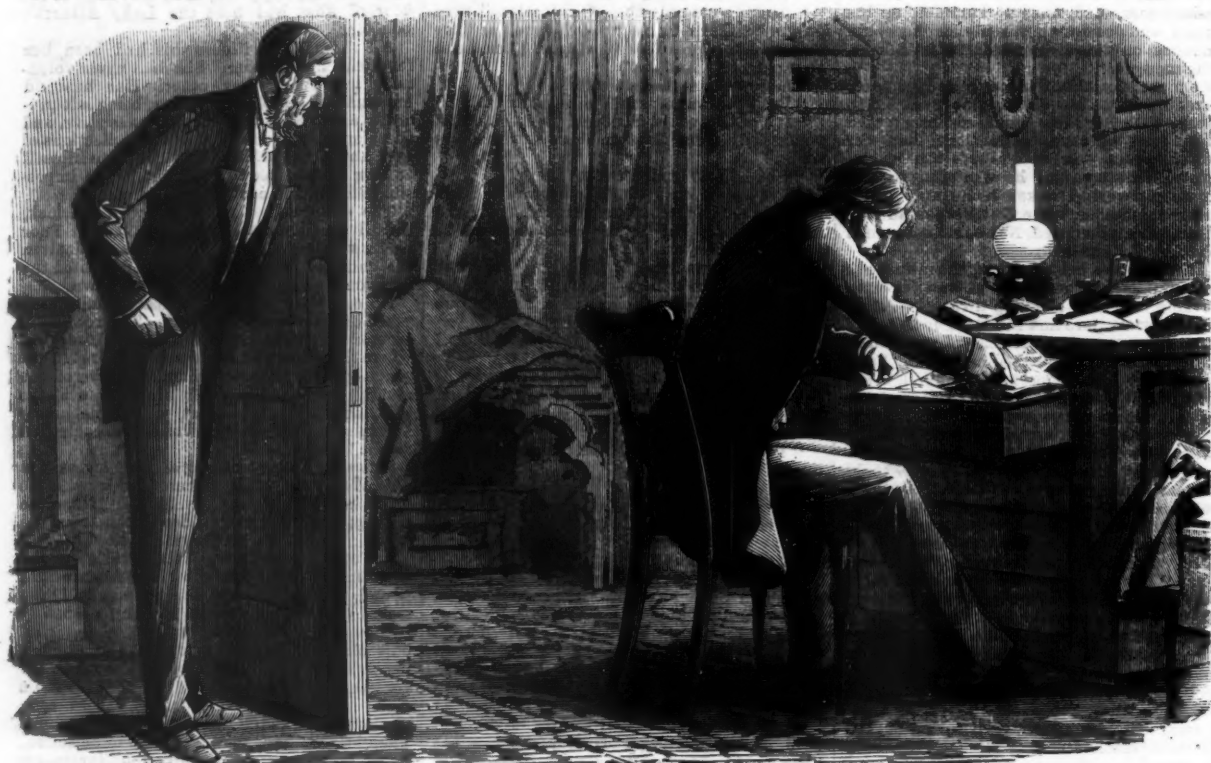
The valet grew more and more alarmed. If this went on it would be impossible to hide his master's affliction from the household. Already the rumours that the boudoir was haunted were current, and Miss Stuart's fainting fit would be likely to give them some foundation.

At his wife's end Andrew sought out the young lady, and though he believed he had ensured her secrecy, the adventure had redoubled his anxiety.

The strangest part of all was that Sir Jocelyn was aware of his propensity; hoping to cure him Andrew had respectfully intimated it to him, and instead of being alarmed, instead of authorizing the locking his door on the outside, or any other precautionary measure, his sole comments were—

"Don't let it get known in the household. And then in a lower tone, 'It may help me; I have heard of extraordinary discoveries being made by sleep-walkers before now,' after which he pursued his midnight researches with redoubled energy.

And so for five years it had gone on, and Andrew, bewildered and troubled as he was, had almost ceased to hope for cure. What his master sought he had no idea; he knew the belief was soon started that Sir Jocelyn and his wife had not been so devoted to each other as they seemed, but he had never subscribed to it. To him there was something piteous in his master's devotion to the dead, and at last



[SIR JOCELYN, ASLEEP THOUGH HE WAS, MECHANICALLY UNLOCKED THE DRAWER AND TOOK OUT ITS CONTENTS.]

he felt certain that only two things could save the baronet from his broken rest and strange propensity—one, the entire reconstruction of the boudoir, and its being in daily use; the other, Sir Jocelyn's finding a face which should seem fairer to him than his loved dead wife's. And both of these certainties seemed remote. Poor Andrew had well-nigh given up hope.

At last the search was ended—for that night, at least. Sir Jocelyn relocked the door, threw the key in his pocket, and turned down the long corridor towards the staircase which led to his own apartments. Andrew contriving to pass him hastened on in front; taking a small kettle from the hob he prepared a cup of French coffee, which he left on the table.

Half-an-hour later, as the clock struck two, Sir Jocelyn was asleep in his own bed, and his faithful retainer was free to seek such slumber as he could get for the rest of the night.

But Andrew was devoted heart and soul to his master. His family had served the Leighs for generations. His father had been own servant to the late Sir Kenneth, and no light cause could have separated Sir Jocelyn and his retainer. Years ago, Andrew, finding broken nights did not agree with him, had taken to long siestas, beginning when his master had gone down to dinner, and ending at ten o'clock. The household often marvelled at his strange ways, but the valet was rather an important person at Alandyke, and no one ventured to inquire the reason.

Sir Jocelyn rose early the following morning. He awoke with a perplexed feeling that something had happened, something unpleasant, too, and slowly he recalled the afternoon's events.

The first result of this was for him to send Andrew to tell nurse the children were to walk with him at eight, and she was to give them some cake first, as they would join the late breakfast downstairs. This seemed to him the best way of preventing the meeting he so much feared. He had quite resolved to send

Miss Stuart away, and how could he be firm if his little black-eyed daughters clung to him with the request which would find such a strong echo in his own heart?

It was a lovely morning, the weather had changed in the night from the lion March to the lamb, and Sir Jocelyn and his little daughters enjoyed their ramble; the baronet a little troubled, perhaps, at the thought of the interview which lay before them. The children troubled about nothing at all, and picking great handfuls of snowdrops and crocuses (the only flowers that will grow above ground in March near Alandyke) to take to their dear Miss Stuart.

They little knew that all through breakfast their father was thinking about her; they little knew their aunt gave them the rare favour of feeding her canary out of their own hands simply because she wanted them not to go near the schoolroom.

There was no use in delay. Sir Jocelyn went upstairs to the schoolroom; the pretty apartment looked cheerful and inviting as ever, the breakfast stood on the table, laid for one.

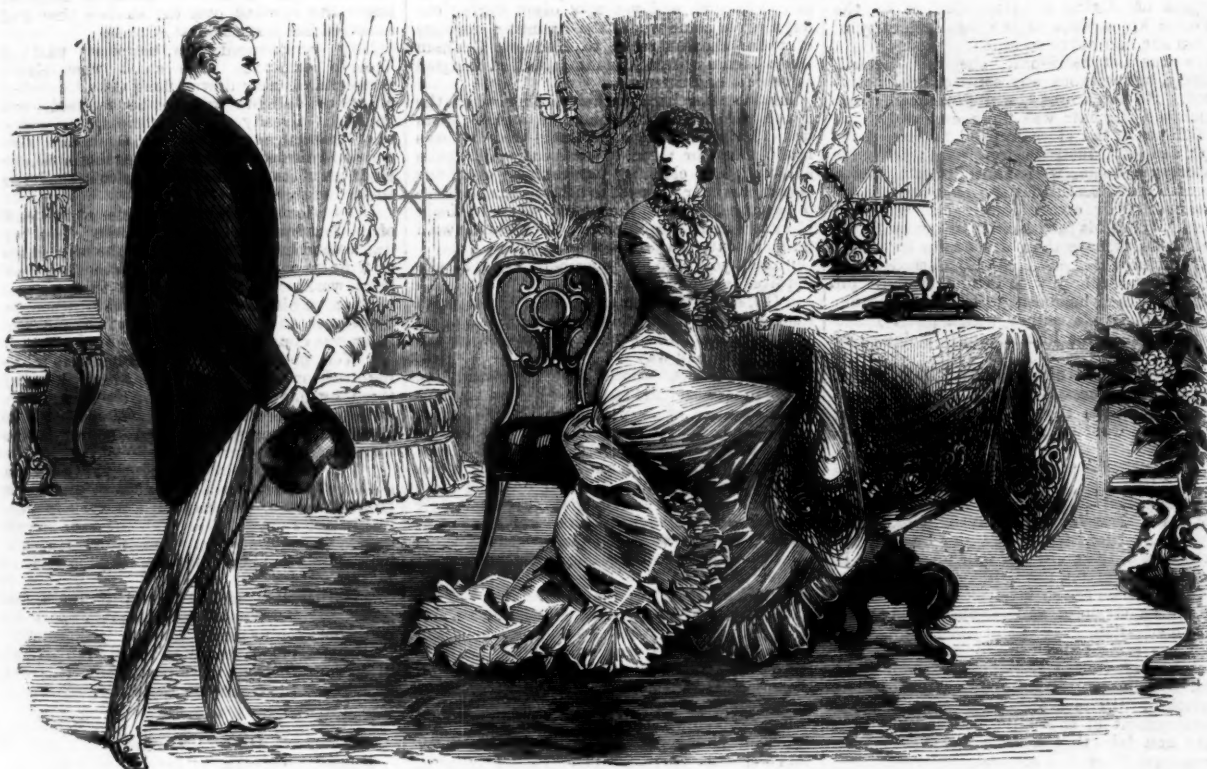
"Poor girl," thought the baronet, "perhaps she was awake half the night, wondering what would become of her. I should like to knock Guy Vernon down; it would be a relief to my feelings." And then he rang the bell for Nancy, and desired her to go and tell Miss Stuart he was waiting to speak to her.

(To be continued.)

DOCTORS IN CHINA.—Their method of treatment is curious. The Chinese have a theory that there is a different pulse in every limb. They also hold that all complaints are connected with either fire, air, or water. And they place immense faith in the benefit to be derived from puncturing any part with a long needle. So it came about that when a man entered and consulted one of the "faculty" about a pain in his leg—probably rheumatic in its nature—the learned man, after glaring at

him for some time through an enormous pair of goggles, proceeded to feel for his "ankle-pulse," which, when found to his satisfaction, indicated some very wonderful facts. The man was suffering, he remarked, from "fire" in the leg, and must be punctured. This operation was performed with a long needle, after which the operator produced a tiny plaster, probably an inch and a half square, and giving it to the man told him to put it on the leg at night. The patient, who seemed to have perfect confidence in the doctor, hobbled off, and the turn of the next victim came. He had a pain in his head, probably having smoked too much opium or drunk too much samtschu. The doctor was quite equal to the occasion. He seized his victim by the head, and taking a small iron rod proceeded to rub his neck till he made an abrasion at least an inch square. Then he rubbed at another spot, and yet another, till the skin was off in three places. This was all. The patient was told to go. He, too, was suffering from "fire." Yet there was no sound of a murmur. The operator evidently was considered a very clever person. Inside the hospital the wards seemed to be in excellent condition. The patients there might have gone to a European hospital had they so chosen; but they preferred the doctoring of their own people, who, from all that I heard, are certainly very clever at putting fractures or dislocations right. I went into the pharmacy and found the medicines were nearly all vegetable—one, the rind of oranges, being in great request. But everything seemed harmless enough; and if the patients die, I should say they are killed by the disease, and not by the doctors.

AMERICAN WOMEN enroach more and more on masculine professions. After female river captains and tram conductors we now hear of a feminine deputy sheriff—a charming young lady of twenty-three, who takes most enthusiastically to her work, and served numerous warrants immediately on her appointment.



["I AM HERE," KENNETH REPLIED, QUIETLY, "FOR THE PURPOSE OF VINDICATING MY HONOUR."]'

NOVELLETTE.]

ON LIFE'S THRESHOLD.

CHAPTER I.

THE London season had reached its meridian, and the Marchioness of Creamshire's spacious rooms—brilliant with light, and fragrant with flowers—were yet hardly large enough to contain all the guests that thronged them on the occasion of the grand ball that formed one of principal features of the season.

It was, indeed, a scene of surpassing beauty and splendour for the eye to gaze upon; full of harmonious colouring, subtle perfume, and gentle motion, while a musical murmur of talk and laughter went on all around.

Only the *élite* of London society were represented at this ball, for the Marchioness prided herself on the exclusive nature of her list of acquaintances, and *nouveaux riches* could never succeed in crossing the charmed circle that she drew around it.

Ambassadors from China, Japan, Siam, and other distant lands were present, clad in picturesque array; rank and wealth rubbed shoulders with genius and learning, and some of the principal lions of the day, martial, musical, literary, or dramatic, were to be met with, as the night wore on, among the fashionable crowd.

Dan Godfrey's band was discouraging its sweetest strains when a young officer, who had arrived rather late, stood impatiently aside, watching the dancers as they whirled past him. He had failed to obtain a partner for the waltz just commenced.

"All his comrades, watching said,
'He must dance, or he will die,'"

laughingly quoted a brother officer, who formed one of a little group of military men standing in the doorway. "Teddy, old fellow, here comes the Marchioness. Ask her to have pity on you, and introduce you to that pretty girl

in the corner yonder. Rescue her, like a gallant knight, from the clutches of the deaf old dowager who is boring her at the present moment."

The Marchioness, a tall, stately woman, with abundant snow-white hair, gleaming dark eyes and a pleasant smile, willingly granted the young guardsman's request, and he was soon gliding round the room with the pretty girl in question for his partner.

"But my dear Violet, you are not going to belie your name, and become a wall-flower on the occasion of your first ball, such an important affair to most young girls," remarked the Marchioness to a lovely *débutante*, who sat by her mother's side, half frightened, wholly delighted, regarding the gay scene before her with eager, wistful eyes.

"I do not wish her to dance too often," replied Lady Montagu, a pale-faced, aristocratic matron, with frosty blue eyes, and thin, firmly closed lips. "The way in which some girls romp through all the dances is simply disgraceful. Violet has already been asked several times, and I think she can very well sit out the remainder."

"You must not be too hard upon my little girl," said the Marchioness, with a smile. Lady Montagu, who belonged to a poor, though sorely impoverished family, was an old friend of hers, and Violet was her godchild. "This is her first ball, remember. Let her enjoy it as much as possible. She will learn, only too soon, to regard such things from our own faded standpoint, when she has been to many others. Kenneth Graham, the young barrister whose name is on everyone's lips, in connection with the Townshend case, is coming towards us, evidently in search of a partner. Shall I introduce him?"

"By all means," replied Lady Montagu, graciously. If she did not wish her daughter to waste time and run into danger by dancing with ineligible young men she had every desire to encourage the attentions of those on whom Fortune had freely lavished her gifts, and

Kenneth Graham might fairly be regarded as a favourite child of the fickle goddess.

By means of a profound vigorous intellect, severe application, and dogged perseverance, he had gradually emerged from his original obscurity as a briefless young barrister into the broad daylight of success, and a firmly established legal reputation.

Then he had been retained for the defence in one of those "sensation" cases that not unfrequently occur in high life. His masterly elocution, close, powerful argument, and clever application of legal tactics, had gained the day for his client, and increased his own celebrity at the same time.

Briefs poured in upon him rapidly; his society was eagerly competed for even in the most exclusive circles, and he received more invitations throughout the season than he had either the time or the inclination to accept.

He could hardly be called rich, since he had no income beyond that which he derived from his profession. But only one life, that of an old and feeble man, existed between Kenneth Graham and a peerage. This fact was well known to all Belgravian mothers, and Lady Montagu smiled sweetly upon the young man as he wrote his name on Violet's tablets against the next set of lancets, after being introduced. Might not her daughter succeed in winning the matrimonial prize, for which others had angled in vain? She hoped devoutly that such might prove to be the case, for her income was but a small one, and her cold, calculating nature led her to regard her only child very much in the light of so much capital to be well invested for their mutual interest.

Happily unconscious of her mother's mercenary designs, Violet took her place among the other dancers, with her tall partner. She had felt nervous and sorely embarrassed for something to say when dancing with other men, but there was a blending of strength and tenderness in the young barrister's manner that tended to restore her self-confidence. After a few remarks had passed between them,

she even ventured to look up at him for the purpose of getting a better idea as to the personal appearance of the legal celebrity of whom she had heard so much.

He was not handsome, she told herself, quickly, but without any sense of disappointment. He had a broad, white forehead, from which the fair hair was flung carelessly back in defiance of the close-cropped fashion of the day; deep-set, lustrous grey eyes; irregular features; a large, well-shaped mouth, and a splendid set of teeth that showed to advantage whenever their owner indulged in a hearty laugh. What his face lacked in conventional good looks, it more than atoned for in manliness and force of expression. Kenneth Graham was a favourite, both with men and women, for law, in his case, had been grafted on to a frank, genial, irresistible nature, which never failed to gain friends for him among all classes of society.

"Are you fond of dancing?" he inquired, noting the expression of quiet delight on Violet's face, as they floated along to the dreamy, entrancing strains of the splendid band.

"Yes, very!" she replied softly. "This is my first ball, and you cannot think how new and delightful it all seems to me. Why I only came home from the convent-school, near Brussels, a month ago, and now I am in the very heart of the great fashionable world. It might be fairyland, the lights, and the music, and the dresses are so lovely."

Kenneth Graham smiled on hearing this naive confession.

"I am almost inclined to envy you the freshness of feeling that makes a ball seem such a delightful and important event," he remarked. "The bloom so soon gets rubbed off enjoyment of this kind, and yet it is only right and fair that a *débutante* should view everything through a rose-coloured medium."

"I thought perhaps I should be left altogether without partners," she continued in shy merriment. "Would not that have been a dreadful fate? But I have had several already, and I might have had more, only mamma wished me not to dance too often."

"Pray what put such an unreasonable idea into your mind?" inquired Kenneth Graham, with growing interest and amusement.

"Well, as a rule, gentlemen don't care to dance with mere school-girls, do they?" she replied, gravely. "I have read some of Byron's poems, and I know that he made ill-natured remarks about them, poor things."

"The nursery liars out in all their utterances, and then they always smell of bread-and-butter," said the barrister, with a smile. "Are those the lines you wish to refer to, Miss Montagu?"

"I think when Byron wrote them he must have had some awkward, angular school-girl, all red elbows and white pinners, in his mind's eye. He could not possibly have applied them to a sweet child-woman in the first flush of youth, innocence and beauty."

"Standing with reluctant feet
Where the brook and river meet."

In these lines Longfellow has the advantage over Byron, both in true poetry and chivalrous feeling."

"I'm glad to know you don't despise my youth!" she said, gratefully. "At any rate, it is a fault that will grow beautifully less every day of my life."

"Some people would give a great deal only to possess such a failing!" he replied, glancing down at Violet as he spoke, with a look on his face that no young lady of the conventional stereotyped description had ever succeeded in bringing there.

Most big men have an instinctive liking for little women, and Violet's petite loveliness served to enhance the feeling of admiration she had already awakened in Kenneth Graham's breast.

Only a fairy-like girl, with small piquant features, rose-lark complexion, great dark eyes of violet hue looking shyly out from under their heavy white lids, and a quantity of soft brown hair drawn high up, until it formed a

coronet on top of the dainty head. Only a fairy-like girl, and yet how often during the days yet to come would the haunting memory of those charms recur to Kenneth Graham like a strain of familiar music, full of mingled sweetness and sorrow.

He took her back to her mother when the dance was over, and remained beside them until Lady Montagu declared that it was really time for them to be going. When the shawling and cloakng process was over, the young barrister reserved to himself the privilege of putting them into their carriage; and Lady Montagu nestled back among the cushions with an air of extreme satisfaction.

"Have you enjoyed your ball, Violet?" she inquired, sleepily.

"Oh, so much, mamma!" said Violet, with flushed cheeks and sparkling eyes; "and of all my partners, I think Mr. Graham was the nicest by a long way!"

"A candid confession," replied her ladyship. "You must be a little more reserved when commenting upon other people, my dear. At the same time, Mr. Graham is a very estimable young man!"

Kenneth Graham found time to call upon Lady Montagu and her daughter the next morning, and that anxious parent was not slow to observe how frequently he contrived to meet them in society, while on such occasions his attentions were to a great extent concentrated upon Violet.

An old campaigner, she was well acquainted with all the symptoms that lead up to a proposal, and already she began to plume herself upon the probable acquisition of a desirable son-in-law, who would not only take Violet off her hands, but consent to pay some of those tormenting tradespeople into the bargain.

Her ladyship's surmise, to the effect that Kenneth Graham had fallen in love with Violet, was perfectly correct. The girlish loveliness, and simplicity of the *débutante* the quaint, graceful originality that characterized her every word and look, had fairly taken the practical matter-of-fact barrister by storm. Love gained a decisive victory over law; and frequent intercourse with the object of his affection only confirmed him in his desire to win her for his own, and to place himself and all his prospects at her disposal without delay.

And his honest, manly love was not unreciprocated. It would have delighted him could he but have known what a prominent place he occupied in Violet's thoughts, and how dreary a ball or a dinner-party seemed to her when he was not present. Day by day she was all unconsciously realizing the beauty and value of life to a yet fuller extent, as the sun of love rose higher in the sky, enveloping all things of earth in its soft, tremulous golden haze.

She was arranging flowers in the bright, little morning-room after breakfast when Kenneth Graham, an early visitor, was announced.

A sudden thrill swept over the girl's slender form as the object of her day-dreams came and stood by her side.

"They are very lovely," he remarked presently, as he twisted a fragrant narcissus round and round between his fingers; "and how artistically you have arranged them, giving due effect to perfume and colour!"

"Will you have one?" she said, offering him a magnificent carnation; but to her surprise he made no attempt to take it.

"I want a flower, it is true," he continued, in a tone of subdued earnestness; "but it must be of my own choosing."

"What is the name of your favourite flower, since you are so particular?" she inquired, with downcast eyes.

"Violet," he replied, boldly, "and if you cannot give me that I will have no other. Darling, have I made my meaning sufficiently plain?"

He must have succeeded in doing so, for, although her answer was somewhat inarticulate, a very happy young couple presented themselves before Lady Montagu later on to gain her consent to their engagement. She gave it with graceful reluctance and some

comment upon Violet's youthfulness, but in her heart she rejoiced over the success that had attended her matrimonial schemes.

Now commenced the happiest part of Violet's existence. She stood upon life's threshold, gazing down a long vista formed of countless delights yet to be realised, but enjoyed already in anticipation, while the knowledge of Kenneth Graham's love throbbed through all else, imparting a tender gladness of its own to other joys that rendered them doubly dear.

Lady Montagu went to Cannes at the end of the London season, and Kenneth joined his fiancée and her mother there for the brief space of time he could steal from his almost endless legal work. Violet, who feared that he was overtaxing his strength, felt thankful when, in November, they returned to town, and her lover was once more within easy distance.

"Well, pet, have you had a good time?" he inquired, on the day after their arrival, as he stood by one of the drawing-room windows with Violet, while Lady Montagu conveniently disappeared from sight in the depths of an easy chair.

"Yes, very," she replied, gently; "but I am glad to be at home again, with you close at hand, Kenneth. Perhaps I am very foolish, but I have such a dread lest something should occur to separate us, even now, lest our happiness, too, should be complete, too vivid to last."

"You foolish child!" said Kenneth, reassuringly. "Who or what could possibly come between us now?"

But ere Violet could frame any reply Lady Montagu's footman threw open the door and announced the Comte de Beauville.

CHAPTER II.

KENNETH GRAHAM, on looking up somewhat impatiently as the above announcement was made, beheld a middle-aged man of medium height, with a colourless, handsome face, dark hair and eyes, and a small, carefully trimmed beard and moustache. But for a certain worn *blasé* expression, and a liberal allowance of crow's-feet, the Comte de Beauville might have entered the lists as a formidable rival against much younger men and come off victor. As it was, the easy, graceful bearing, and the calm almost-unconscious assurance born of long and varied experience that distinguished him were vastly in his favour, and helped to remove any sinister impressions that his passion-worn face and softly-spoken innuendoes and sarcastic remarks had produced upon others.

A wealthy bachelor, belonging to an old French family, and the owner of several large estates in the South of France, the Comte was always well received in the best society that London and Paris could afford. His extravagant tastes and wild deeds had made a name for him throughout Europe, and yet the world had not banished him from its good graces. For thus far he had contrived to avoid committing any of the sharply defined and glaring faults that it feels reluctantly called upon to condemn, even in its most-favoured children.

Lady Montagu had frequently met the Comte de Beauville in society both at home and abroad, during Violet's schooldays, and it was with a feeling of pleasure and maternal satisfaction that she introduced him to her daughter, and noted the look of repressed, but genuine admiration that passed over his face, as he greeted Violet with a blending of courteous familiarity and well-measured astonishment.

"Is it possible, my dear Lady Montagu," he exclaimed, gently, "that the little one at whose shrine I once offered incense in the shape of toys and bon-bons has developed into such a charming *démouelle*? It is such a long while ago that I fear she has forgotten all about her first admirer," he continued, with a smile.

"I can just remember you, Monsieur le Comte," said Violet, rather coldly. His con-

colloquy manner had for once failed to produce a good impression; and the young girl already entertained an instinctive aversion towards this nervous, supple, perfectly dressed Frenchman.

"How kind, how generous of you to carry the image of one so unworthy in your heart until now!" he replied, gracefully, while Kenneth Graham stood by with a very perceptible frown on his fair, English face. To the young barrister, with his high principles and fine sense of honour, a fashionable *roué* like the Comte de Beauville was a very contemptible person indeed. It annoyed him beyond measure to think that such a being was permitted by the usages of society to approach his Violet—the pure, sweet, flower of womanhood that was from henceforth to bloom for him alone. In Kenneth's opinion that gallie weed, the Comte, was guilty of sacrilege in venturing to breathe the same air with Lady Montagu's daughter.

"You must not address too many pretty speeches to Violet," remarked Lady Montagu, smilingly, "or Mr. Graham may object. This is her first season, and she is already a fiancée. My one ewe lamb has been appropriated, you see, while some mothers, who can boast of a whole flock, are left in undisturbed possession of their treasures."

"Mr. Graham is deeply to be envied," said the Comte, regarding the young barrister as he spoke, with a comprehensive glance of newly-awakened interest. "At the same time I can but admire the promptitude he has displayed in securing so fair a prize without any loss of time. Doubtless he was aware that many other suitors would find their way to that sheepfold."

"Exactly," replied Kenneth; "and some of them might, on inspection, have turned out to be wolves in disguise."

"You will dine with us to-night, Comte?" said Lady Montagu, anxious to turn the conversation into a more desirable channel. There was evidently a screw loose somewhere; and the two men were not getting on at all well-together.

"I shall be delighted to accept your invitation," replied the Comte, who had suddenly determined to spend as much time as possible in Violet's society, if only for the malicious pleasure of annoying Kenneth Graham, whose prejudice against himself he had not failed to remark. "I only arrived in town this morning, and I am perfectly willing to devote as much of my time to your ladyship as you may care to claim."

"Mind that we do not cause you to regret the rash offer just made before the season is over," said Lady Montagu. "Mr. Graham's legal engagements frequently take him away from us, and when that is the case, and we require an escort, I shall call upon you to fulfil your promise."

"I shall be happy to take Mr. Graham's place with you at any and all times," he replied, in a tone that exasperated Kenneth to the last verge of endurance, although there was nothing in either the words or the manner of uttering them that he could take open offence at.

"You, of course, will dine with us, Kenneth?" remarked Lady Montagu, sweetly.

"I am afraid I shall not be able to do so to-night," he rejoined, as he took leave of Violet, and bestowed a very slight bow upon the Comte de Beauville; "but I shall meet you at the opera later on, and after that there will be the D'Arcey ball."

"Dear fellow, he works so hard!" said Lady Montagu, sympathetically, as the door closed behind Kenneth, mused to Violet's regret and the Comte's satisfaction. He had the coast all to himself now, and he was not likely to allow such a good opportunity for supplanting another man in the affections of a lovely woman to slip through his fingers.

Without any apparent effort he laid himself out to please both mother and daughter. Choice morsels of scandal, racy anecdotes,

piquant and very personal stories concerning well-known men and women, clever caustic character sketches flowed from his lips for the benefit of Lady Montagu, who listened and laughed even while she scolded him for uttering them. To Violet, however, he spoke chiefly of books, pictures, music and foreign travels, drawing her out as to her own tastes, and inserting here and there a delicately-worded compliment.

"But, although he made her feel interested in spite of herself, Violet could not overcome her previously formed dislike to the Comte de Beauville. She was thankful when his visit came to an end; and dinner that night seemed, to her, a tedious affair since Kenneth was not present. The Frenchman's brilliant conversation could not reconcile her to her lover's absence, or cause her to forget it for the space of one moment.

Kenneth joined them at the opera, according to promise; but even there in some insupportable manner, and without any absolute breach of courtesy, the Comte contrived to monopolize Violet's attention and to prevent the lovers from indulging in the pleasant interrupted talk of two, so dear to all engaged people.

"I've hardly been able to say a word to you all night, thanks to that French fellow," growled Kenneth, as they made their way out with the Comte de Beauville and Lady Montagu on ahead. "He might confine his attention to your mother, Violet. It's bad form on his part to monopolize you so completely, especially when I am present. If it goes on I shall speak to Lady Montagu about it. A scamp like De Beauville ought not to be admitted to the same degree of familiarity as a family friend."

Much to Kenneth Graham's disgust, however, the Comte became a daily visitor in Park-lane. Lady Montagu met his remonstrance with a few words of vague excuse and explanation. The Comte de Beauville was really an old friend of hers. He had known his wild oats, and was about to settle down as a respectable member of society. She could not find it in her heart to cut him, or even to discourage his frequent visits.

Lady Montagu would hardly have seen so much of her old friend had it not been for Violet, who was, in fact, the magnet that served to draw him so often in the direction of Park-lane.

His cold heart, fastidious self-centred tastes, and cultured intellect had thus far enabled him to float easily and pleasantly over the sea of life, indulging in every enjoyment without coming in contact with any dangerous rocks in the shape of deep, lasting attachment, or passionate, absorbing love calculated to shake the severe cynical philosophy upon which he secretly prided himself to its centre, and prove to him that, like other men, he was but human.

With every form and degree of flirtation; however, he was thoroughly acquainted. These mere skirmishes with love's outposts, so far as he himself was concerned, did not go far below the surface or produce any serious result. For the possible effect upon the woman's heart he cared but little; it was such an easy matter to throw the toy aside when once he had broken it and look round for another.

Why this man, who had so long scoffed at love, and who had been in the habit of meeting many of the fairest and most brilliant women society could boast of for years past without succumbing to their charms, should suddenly have fallen violently in love with a shy, gentle unassuming girl, fresh from school, and who had never given him the least encouragement, is a metaphysical mystery that must perforce remain unsolved. There was at least some poetical justice in the fact of his choice; having fallen upon one who cared less than nothing for him; and who, was moreover, the promised wife of another man. Hard and pitiless himself, he had yet to learn the pain and humilia-

tion of being compelled to see in vain for the treasure he most desired to possess.

In his heart of hearts the Comte de Beauville had determined that Violet should one day become his wife. If her engagement to Kenneth Graham was a serious stumbling-block in his path it yet served to impart a peculiar zest to the affair. To him it would be a daring, as well as a delightful thing to usurp the young barrister's place as Violet's acknowledged lover, and to effect a successful raid upon another man's preserves.

He had read Lady Montagu aright, and he felt certain that she would not scruple to sell her daughter to the highest bidder; about Violet's sentiments, though, he was much less confident.

"I wish that I had come upon the scene a little sooner, or else that I had stayed away altogether!" he remarked to Lady Montagu one day, when Violet was not present. "Your daughter's premature engagement to that decidedly uninteresting barrister, Kenneth Graham, has deprived me of the pleasure I should have experienced in becoming your son-in-law, Lady Montagu, had circumstances been differently arranged!"

Her ladyship regarded him, as he spoke, with a glance of profound astonishment.

"What a strange speech for a confirmed bachelor to make!" she replied, anxious to arrive at his real meaning. "Did you not tell me once that married life had no charms for you?"

"No sensible person ever forms an opinion or airs a theory believing it will last them without any change or modification to the end!" was the ready retort. "Fresh events are constantly compelling us to adapt our ideas to their requirements. My prejudices against matrimony vanished from the hour when I first became acquainted with the lovely girl whom I cannot now the glad privilege of wooing; since—unfortunately for my peace of mind—she is already appropriated. I would willingly give the half of all that I am worth could I but stand in Kenneth Graham's place!"

For once in his life, the Comte de Beauville was thoroughly in earnest. Lady Montagu perceived this, and a feeling of intense regret and petulant self-reproach darted through her mind in consequence. Here was a man, ready to place both his title and estate at her daughter's feet; and she had allowed the girl to engage herself to a mere barrister, who might have to wait years before getting either. It was really too provoking; for although the engagement had appeared to be a very desirable one at the time, the Comte de Beauville's confession had thrown it entirely in the shade. Lady Montagu told herself that she had been very foolish in accepting the first fairly good offer for Violet; and yet, much as she longed to break off the now unsatisfactory engagement, no valid excuse for such a proceeding suggested itself to her fertile imagination.

But what she could not accomplish for herself, subsequent events kindly accomplished for her. Glancing down the *Morning Post* a few weeks later on, in a state of extreme low spirits, owing to her heavy debts, an important announcement met her eye; an announcement that had to be read twice over before she could fully realize its meaning.

"Violet, what do you think?" she said, quickly. "Lord Fossilton, Kenneth Graham's great-uncle, has just married one of the Montmorency girls! He must be in his dotage; such a ridiculous disparity, too, in point of age! In all probability, there will be a son-and-heir, and Kenneth will not succeed to the title and estate after all!"

"Poor Kenneth, what a shame!" replied Violet, indignantly; "but it will not affect him so much, since his profession secures for him a good income, and renders him quite independent of Lord Fossilton!"

"You are a foolish child!" said her ladyship, sharply; "and you know nothing about money matters. His marriage will make a great difference in Kenneth's prospects; and it

may very likely affect your engagement, Violet. I cannot allow you to marry a man who has only his professional income to depend upon!"

"Mamma! how can you say such a thing?" demanded Violet, breathlessly. "I love Kenneth for himself, not for anything that he may or may not possess. I will never consent to give him up."

As she spoke the drawing-room door opened quietly, and Kenneth entered unannounced. He glanced swiftly from Lady Montagu to her daughter, and drew his own deductions from their troubled faces.

"I am glad that you are here, Mr. Graham!" said Lady Montagu, coldly. "I wish to speak to you in private. Violet, dear child, will you go down to the dining-room? Madame Leman wishes to ask you some questions about your new ball-dresses."

"No, I will not go!" Violet replied, earnestly. "I must hear what you are about to say to Kenneth, mamma, since it concerns me so closely."

"You are a wilful girl," said Lady Montagu, "but it will make little difference whether you go or stay. I only wished to save you from unnecessary pain. Mr. Graham!" she continued, "are you aware that your great-uncle, Lord Fossilton, was married yesterday?"

"He acquainted me with that important fact only this morning by means of a telegram," said Kenneth Graham, quietly.

"His marriage must needs affect your prospects to a serious extent!" she continued. "And under the circumstances, much as they are to be deplored, I cannot allow Violet to become your wife! As a man of honour you will doubtless consent at once to release her from her engagement, since your position has just undergone such a radical change for the worse."

"Violet, does this request emanate in the first instance from you?" he inquired gravely, and sadly, as her eyes met his, like clear wells of sunny light, within whose liquid depths truth ever lurked. "Am I to understand that you wish our engagement and all connected with it to come to an end?"

"No, a thousand times no!" she replied with a great sob. "I will never give you up, Kenneth, of my own free will I hold you to your promise as much now as ever. I am not an automaton," she continued, firmly, "to be disposed of without any regard to my own wishes in the matter. I accepted you with mamma's full consent as my future husband; but I cannot renounce you at her bidding."

"Lady Montagu, you hear this?" said Kenneth, as a look of intense relief and gladness passed over his stern, young face. "Violet is true to me, and I refuse to accept my dismissal from anyone else. I hardly know why you should withdraw your favour from me simply because I am not very likely to inherit the Fossilton property now, owing to my uncle's marriage. My income, like my reputation in legal circles, is steadily on the increase. Some day I may even gain a title, and in that case it will be the fruit of my own endeavours, no worthless thing inherited from a defunct relative."

"I have nothing more to say upon the subject!" remarked Lady Montagu, icily, "unless it is that I am surprised at your unwillingness to grant my request. Violet being only a minor I might, if I thought proper to do so, exert my authority and put an end to the engagement at once, only I am reluctant to adopt any extreme measures. You take advantage of my generosity!"

"I fail to perceive it!" said Kenneth, dryly. "The Comte de Beauville may however, be much better acquainted with it. Your ladyship has always regarded him with favour."

Then, ere the guilty flush that his words had called up to Lady Montagu's pale cheek had subsided Kenneth Graham left the house in a frame of mind to quarrel with the whole world, and let it come on if it dared. Then the memory of Violet's brave, loving words and staunch fidelity came to his aid, and he told himself that with such a treasure still remain-

ing to him all minor evils might safely be tided over, and vanquished in the end.

CHAPTER III.

INDIRECTLY, old Lord Fossilton had inflicted a grievous injury upon Violet Montagu, when he thought proper to marry a woman young enough to be his own daughter. But for this marriage, Kenneth Graham would still have been heir-presumptive to the title and estates, with every prospect of speedy inheritance, while Lady Montagu would not have withdrawn her consent from the engagement existing between her daughter and the young barrister.

As it was, Kenneth Graham steadily refused to accept his dismissal from any lips save Violet's own. He still went to Lady Montagu's house occasionally, to see his fiancée, although, to his proud spirit, the idea of entering a house where all the inmates save one regarded him in the light of an unwelcome intruder, was hateful in the extreme. For Violet's sake, however, he continued his visits, in spite of all discouragement offered him by Lady Montagu. The dogged pertinacious defiant side of his character was aroused to its fullest extent by the unfair opposition, and quiet, but systematic persecution to which they were both subjected.

Lady Montagu longed to close her doors altogether against Kenneth Graham, since her matrimonial projects for Violet had undergone a radical change. But he was too well-known, too important a member of society, for such an extreme course of action to be adopted towards him without causing an unpleasant *escalandre*, and an unpleasant amount of gossip and wonderment in polite circles.

He had not misbehaved himself in any way, and she could hardly account for the sudden breaking off of the engagement by disclosing her true motive for such an unjust proceeding, viz., the arrival upon the scene of a far wealthier lover, and the change that had taken place in Kenneth Graham's prospects, owing to his uncle's marriage. Decency and a dread of public opinion compelled her, sorely against her will, to tolerate his visits. She revenged herself, however, by making them as unsatisfactory as possible.

Kenneth was never allowed to see Violet save in the presence of a third person, and sometimes of a fourth, for the Comte de Beauville spent a considerable portion of each day at Lady Montagu's house. He was regarded by Violet with ill-concealed dislike and aversion; his carefully-planned efforts to establish himself in her favour meeting with but little success.

But if Lady Montagu could not resort to actual force in getting rid of the young barrister, more delicate and diplomatic means were yet at her disposal.

He had told her frankly that he would never give Violet up until, of her own accord, she requested him to do so; failing that, he should consider their engagement as binding upon them *res ever*. A keen, practised reader of human nature, Lady Montagu knew perfectly well that if Violet could once be inclined to ask for her freedom, pride and wounded love would make Kenneth Graham grant it without any further remonstrance. To accomplish her object she must undermine the foundations of faith and love upon which Violet's firm allegiance to her lover was based. What chance had a weak trusting girl who knew nothing of the world against a clever, crafty woman, especially when that woman happened to be her mother? Lady Montagu determined, in her own mind, that the undesirable engagement should yet be dissolved with Violet's entire consent, since in no other way could it be brought to an end.

Sarcastic speeches, vague innuendoes, and a fearfully irritating system of ceaseless "nagging" were brought to bear upon the girl's brave spirit until her health began to suffer under the prolonged mental strain, and her nerves became unusually weak, although she steadfastly refused to capitulate. Kenneth to her was dearer than life itself.

"They are making it very hard for you Violet," he remarked in a tone of angry compassion when they actually found themselves left in a state of undisturbed felicity for a brief space of time on the occasion of a ball to which they had both been invited. Lady Montagu, had intrusted her daughter to the care of a friend, a nervous headache having prevented her from mounting guard over Violet as usual, and the lovers had wandered away into the conservatory while the chaperone was enjoying herself at the supper-table, fondly imagining Violet to be somewhere in the immediate vicinity.

"Never mind, they cannot force me to give way," she replied, with a wan little smile, although her pale face and the dark circles under her large eyes bore mute witness to what she had suffered on his behalf. "Perhaps, when mamma finds that I am not to be coerced, she will relent, and allow matters to resume their old aspect between us, Kenneth, dear. For the present we must be patient."

"I am thinking of you, not of myself," he continued, moodily. "It breaks my heart to know what you are made to endure every day on my account. Oh! why did that wretched old idiot suddenly take it into his head to get married? The burial service would have been more in his line. I never coveted his money or his title, Violet, until I ascertained what importance your mother placed upon both. I would give anything to possess them now in order to remove the barrier so cruelly erected between us."

"So long as we remain true to each other, Kenneth," she replied, soothingly, "no external circumstances will be able really to keep us apart; in heart and spirit we shall still be one."

"I am a selfish wretch, after all," he said reproachfully, as he bent down and kissed her sweet, fair face again and yet again. "You are doing your best to console and comfort me when you stand so sorely in need of help and comfort yourself. Oh, my Violet!" he continued, earnestly, "I am working hard, harder than I ever worked in my life before, to earn money enough to satisfy Lady Montagu's demands. I do not think she would have been quite so unyielding towards us if that fellow, the Comte de Beauville, with his enormous income, of which he has never really earned one franc, had not turned up again at an unlucky moment. Most men would regard him as a formidable rival, but I have unbounded confidence in the fidelity of the girl I love."

"I wish he would leave town and never come back again," said Violet, wearily; "he would hardly waste so many elegantly turned compliments upon me if he but knew how thoroughly I detest him."

"He is doing his best to supplant me," rejoined Kenneth, "and your mother fully sanctions the attempt. He is a mean hound, and if I could but enjoy the luxury of thrashing him soundly I should feel all the better for it, both in mind and body."

"A lawyer should not talk of breaking the peace," she replied, in a less desponding tone, "at least, he is only supposed to do such a thing according to legal rules, when he invariably gets well paid for it and escapes all blame. Couldn't you contrive to involve the Comte de Beauville in a complicated law suit, Kenneth? That would be less risky than the thrashing."

"I should like to have him under cross-examination," said Kenneth, grimly. "I'd make it deucedly warm for him in return for his presumption in pestering you with his society so often."

"It is dreadfully annoying," replied Violet, "but with the knowledge of your love to give me fresh strength, neither mamma's remonstrances, nor the Comte de Beauville's unwelcome attentions, can effect any change in the resolve to which I adhere so firmly, and that is to remain true to you through all. Let us go back to the ball-room now, Kenneth dear, or we shall be missed."

Violet was very staunch in her allegiance to

her lover, in spite of all the maternal persecution brought to bear upon her. But even her brave spirit quailed a little when, some few weeks after the above-mentioned episode, Kenneth Graham came to bid her good-bye before embarking for Calcutta.

He had been offered an enormous fee if he would consent to go to India for the purpose of defending a native prince who had been accused of appropriating public funds and otherwise misconducting himself. The temptation was too great to be resisted, the opportunity far too good to be neglected by a rising man, and Kenneth had decided to undertake the defence of the royal misdoer.

Could he but succeed, with the odds so greatly against him, in triumphantly asserting his client's fair fame, his legal reputation would be considerably enhanced, while his income would receive a valuable addition. Impatient in his desire to overcome the obstacles that Lady Montagu had thrown in the way of his marriage with Violet, he gladly availed himself of the short cut to fortune thus opened before him. The only drawback to it was the long separation from Violet that it involved.

Lady Montagu, for reasons of her own, was so pleased to hear of his approaching departure that she actually bade Kenneth a gracious farewell, and left the lovers in undisturbed peace during their final interview.

"Violet, darling, do not grieve so sorely," said Kenneth Graham beseechingly, as he hid her fearful face in her hands, and sobbed afresh. "I shall lose all heart for my work if I have to carry away with me the memory of such a sad farewell. Our parting will only be for a year at the longest; and time flies so quickly that you will soon have to be dwelling upon my return. I hope to bring back with me rupees and laurels enough to satisfy even your mother's requirements, and then our wedding will be the result. Are you afraid of the pressure that will be brought to bear upon you by others when I am gone?"

"No!" she replied, firmly. "I can bear that, or anything else for your sake, Kenneth. No amount of coercion will ever make me prove false to you. But I shall feel so lonely when you are no longer at hand to cheer and strengthen me, and the haunting dread of some evil, destined to arise during your absence, rests heavily upon me now."

"You are nervous and low-spirited," he said, cheerily. "You will be better by the time my first letter reaches you, full of Indian news. I shall write by every mail, and now I want you to let me see one of the old sunny smiles on your face before I go. A tearful parting would be but an ill omen for us, love."

The days that immediately followed Kenneth's departure seemed long and dreary, indeed, to Violet. The arrival of his first letter, replete with amusing pencil-sketches, vivid description, and tender messages, served to console her in a measure while she waited eagerly for the second. That also came to hand in due course, but the following mail brought her nothing save disappointment. No welcome letter from Calcutta was placed in her little desk after being carefully read and re-read, and Kenneth's broken promise grieved her sorely.

"Mr. Graham is doubtless too much engaged to devote any of his time to letter-writing," Lady Montagu remarked, with smooth acerbity, that really covered a great deal of secret dread as she noted Violet's restless, unhappy condition, caused by her lover's inexplicable silence.

Mail after mail came in, bringing no letter for her, although the progress of the now celebrated trial, in which Kenneth Graham figured so prominently, owing to his cleverly conducted defence, was duly recorded in all the papers.

The tears caused by a fresh disappointment were still glistening in her eyes one morning when Lady Montagu entered the room with several well-known society journals in her hand, and a look of elaborate pity and commiseration on her thin high-bred face.

"Violet, my poor child," she began softly,

"it is my painful duty to call your attention to an important announcement relating to Kenneth Graham that has only just come under my notice. I fear it is but too well authenticated. If so, you will regret that you did not take my advice, and break off your engagement with him long ago."

Fearful of she knew not what Violet took the *Whitehall Review* from her mother's hand, and glanced at the paragraph indicated.

The news that nearly made her heart stop beating as she read was to the effect that Kenneth Graham, the eminent young barrister, had recently become engaged to a young and beautiful heiress, the daughter of an English gentleman, with whom he had become acquainted soon after his arrival in India. Their marriage, it was stated, would in all probability, take place previous to his return, when bride and bridegroom would together seek their native land.

Mechanically Violet took up some of the other papers. All tended to confirm the statement contained in the first. As she flung them aside with a sudden tremulous gesture, indicative of a sorely wounded heart, Violet thought bitterly that her own engagement had been comparatively unknown beyond the family circle.

How she lived through the terrible days that followed hard upon this, her first great sorrow, she scarcely knew, but she could never recall them afterwards without a shudder. She knew, however, that Lady Montagu was universally kind and considerate to her, while the Comte de Beauville at first attempted nothing beyond mute, unobtrusive sympathy, or some little friendly attention. He was too wary a diplomatist to injure his cause by making any decided advances until that deep, aching wound had, in a measure, become healed.

Kenneth Graham's conduct was to Violet a cruel riddle that no effort of hers could solve. More in sorrow than in anger she pondered over it by day and night without ever drawing any nearer to the truth. The motive that had induced one, to all appearance so proud, so honourable, and so loving to act thus basely towards the woman of his choice was unknown to her, and the unexplained mystery that shrouded the whole affair served to render it doubly distressing.

Absorbed in her own grief, Violet failed to notice the Comte de Beauville's increasing tenderness of manner, or the worn, anxious look that constantly rested upon Lady Montagu's face. The former surprised her at length by a declaration of love, uttered in such earnest, impassioned tones that she could hardly recognize the speaker as the cynical, self-contained Comte de Beauville.

She gave him a firm but gentle refusal, which he declined, however, to accept as final. To Violet's extreme consternation, when she informed her mother of what had occurred, that stately dame broke down altogether, and implored her almost frantically to reconsider her decision.

"We are frightfully in debt," she said, "and your marriage alone can save us from utter ruin and disgrace. The Comte has promised to make the most liberal settlement in the event of your becoming his wife, and why should you refuse him since you are no longer engaged to Kenneth Graham? Violet, for my sake, if not for your own, accept him when next he asks you to do so. You will not surely let me come to want and poverty in my old age when it is in your power to rescue me from such a miserable fate."

Wearied, harassed, perplexed on all sides, Violet wavered, and then finally gave way to her mother's entreaties. Had the old understanding still existed between her and Kenneth no power on earth would have induced her to accept the Comte de Beauville. But Kenneth had deserted her, and an act of self-sacrifice intended to benefit her mother could hardly render her sad young life more dreary.

She consented to become the Comtesse de Beauville, and Lady Montagu, released from her burden of anxiety, grew radiant with de-

light. Had she not secured five hundred a-year for herself by her daughter's marriage, apart from other benefits?

The preparations for the wedding were hastened as much as possible, although neither lover nor mother could rouse Violet to take a keen interest in such important questions as the marriage settlements, the wedding tour, or the trousseau itself.

"Let it be as you like," was the invariable reply; and with the mere fact of her passive acquiescence in all their plans they were compelled to be content.

CHAPTER IV.

THE Comte de Beauville's marriage was a very quiet one, owing to the recent death of a near relative.

Violet went through the trying ordeal without manifesting the least emotion, although her face was strangely white and rigid; and Lady Montagu experienced a passing sensation of remorse as she contrasted her daughter's listless, uninterested air, so unusual in a fair young bride, with the glad, joyous tone, the eager anticipation of coming delight, that had characterised her but a few short months ago.

She comforted herself, however, with the reflection that Violet's extreme youth would soon enable her to cast aside the memory of her former love, and take a keen delight in the life of perpetual change and pleasure that would open out before her as the Comte de Beauville's wife.

She had never studied her child's nature; she knew but little of its capacity for hidden suffering and patient fidelity, and the liberal settlements had blinded her short-sighted eyes to almost everything else.

Violet's husband took her to Brittany for the honeymoon. Nearly all his relatives lived there, and he wished his bride to find favour in their sight.

Violet could not be induced to regard the family verdict as a matter of great importance, and she allowed herself to be introduced to four grim, scraggy, maiden sisters, a grandmother, and a countless host of aunts, uncles, and cousins, all priding themselves on the purity of the de Beauville blood and descent, without the least trepidation, since she no longer felt nervously interested in any earthly event to be nervous about it.

The de Beauvilles received her with chilling reserve and distant courtesy. The Comte's marriage with an Englishwoman of good family, but no fortune, had annoyed them sorely.

"Since he must needs get married," they said among themselves, "he might at least have had the grace to marry one of his own countrywomen."

Some of them had even cherished hopes that he would always remain a bachelor, and Violet's advent into the bosom of her new family was unmarked by any warm demonstrations of welcome, while her evident contempt for their patronising advances, and her supreme indifference to their opinions, grated upon their pride, and tended to increase their prejudice against her.

The Comte de Beauville, who soon grew weary of life in the country, seized the first opportunity to shift his quarters to Paris, and give Violet her first glimpse of that world-renowned capital.

Her beauty, grace, and high breeding, combined with her splendid gift of song, soon singled her out for special notice in society, and ere long she created a perfect furor.

The "best" people gladly accepted her invitation, and welcomed her as their guest in return. Fêted, flattered, caressed, sought after on all sides, Violet de Beauville became one of the most popular women of the day, and her husband exulted in her success, although his marriage had been the means of transforming him into a self-tormentor of the worst description.

He was still passionately in love with his beautiful young wife, and he had, moreover,

conceived a vehement desire to obtain from her something beyond the mere respect and toleration that she had from the first accorded to him. What was the use of being able to call her his own, while her heart still remained in the keeping of another? An exquisitely wrought casket from which the jewel had been abstracted, leaving it empty, could hardly have been more unsatisfactory to its owner.

He endeavored by every means in his power to win from her some profession of love; but Violet, although willing to comply with his other wishes and demands after her usual gentle forbearing manner, was far too honest to assume what she did not really possess, and his efforts invariably proved fruitless. Then a reaction would set in, and tired of trying to arouse some warmer feeling for himself within her breast by fair means, he became cynical, morose, and generally unbearable. But neither lover-like devotion nor investive and attended neglect, produced any lasting impression upon Violet; she was dutiful to her husband, but she did not care enough for him to study his ever-varying moods.

She tried hard to put Kenneth Graham from her thoughts altogether, and yet she not unfrequently detected herself in the act of wondering whether he had returned to England, and if so, whether she would some day be compelled to meet him with his wife in society. It was hardly possible for her to avoid dwelling upon the apparent baseness of his conduct towards her, since it was so utterly inconsistent with all else in his frank, honorable nature.

But for those printed proofs of his faithlessness that she still possessed, the events of the last few months would have seemed to her like a bad dream from which she would presently awake to find herself Kenneth's affianced bride as of old.

Thus far in her married life Violet had felt grateful for the care and attention lavished upon her by the Comte de Beauville, and a little sorry that she could give him no more in return for all his devotion. But the future held in store for her a revelation destined to destroy even the slight bond of union then existing between the ill-matched pair.

She was answering notes of invitation one day, during her husband's temporary absence, in a charming little room that looked out on to a sweep of shaven turf, adorned with sparkling jets d'eau of fantastic form, and great clusters of purple rhododendrons, when a visitor was announced, and Kenneth Graham, like a ghost from the past, stood before her.

He looked full ten years older than when she had last seen him. There were deep lines on his strong, fair face, while the old tender light had died out from his eyes, leaving them cold and hard in expression.

"Kenneth, you here!" Violet exclaimed, too much surprised to greet him with due formality.

"Yes," he replied, quietly, "I am here for the purpose of vindicating my honour, which, it appears, has suffered somewhat during my stay in India through a statement circulated without my knowledge, and which you, among others, were only too glad to await yourself of."

"What statement do you allude to?" she inquired, faintly, a chill sense of some revelation about to be made when too late for it to be of any use coursing through her mind the while.

"Were it otherwise Kenneth Graham would not be standing there with such righteous indignation in his voice and look."

"I allude to the infamous falsehood that spoke of me as engaged, and about to be married to the daughter of a dear old friend since dead," he continued. "When this false statement was being actively circulated at home, by means of the society papers, I was working hard out in India to earn money and reputation for the sake of a woman who, previous to my departure, had promised to remain true to me through all temptations. I succeeded, and on the day of my final triumph I heard that the woman I

loved, not wisely but too well, had become the Comtesse de Beauville. And yet, fool that I was, to stake all my happiness upon her lightly-broken vow, I can yet afford to look down with scorn and contempt upon the knave who won her under false pretences."

"Do you mean to say that you are not engaged—that the reports circulated about you were utterly without foundation?" she said, with a calmness born of intense, awful despair.

"I do," he replied, sternly. "They were only brought under my notice upon my return to England, and I have succeeded in tracing them to their source. They were the joint production of your mother and the Comte de Beauville—a pretty piece of authorship, ably edited."

"Oh, what have I done?" she moaned, as she sank back upon the velvet lounge, with a little wailing cry. "I have ruined my own life and yours as well, Kenneth! Heaven is my witness that I really believed all the rumours published concerning your engagement. At the time they went nigh to break my heart, otherwise I should not have consented to marry the Comte de Beauville. I can see it all now," she continued, bitterly. "I was so young and inexperienced in the ways of the world that it was an easy matter for them to lead me astray. If the daily wretchedness of my life could be placed in contrast with the misery I have all unwittingly brought upon you, you would yet deem yourself amply avenged."

He did not doubt her words; they bore the stamp of truth and deep unavailing regret too plainly marked upon them for that. As he regarded her, sitting there so despondently, with bowed weary head and clasped hands, anger slowly gave way to pity and compassion.

"It is hard for us both," he said, in a gentler tone, "but you should have been less ready to believe such a preposterous story about me, Violet."

"I should not have believed it," she replied, "only the long silence on your part that preceded it led me to fear the worst. An occasional letter from you would have been sufficient to dispel all my doubts. I longed and prayed for tidings; I wrote to inquire the cause of your silence; why did you give me no answer?"

"I wrote to you by every mail," he said vehemently. "I never missed once. Is it possible that my letters were withheld from you?"

"They must have been," she continued, a bright red anger spot beaming on each pale cheek as she spoke. "Kenneth, after your departure I only received two letters from you; I have them still. How dared they act so cruelly towards us?"

"They did their work thoroughly," he remarked, with a calmness that he was far from feeling. "Only three times was I permitted to hear from you, and your silence perplexed me sorely. I think that I have nearly laid bare all the duplicity they have been guilty of by this time. Even supposing me to be false to you, Violet, how could you consent to marry De Beauville?"

"I did it for my mother's sake," said Violet slowly; "little dreaming what she had already done for me. She told me that, unless I married the Comte de Beauville, she would be brought to want and poverty in her old age. I thought you had forsaken me, and so, to satisfy her, caring but little what befel me in my desolation of heart, I married that man. But after what you have told me I will not, I cannot, stay with him another day. Kenneth, what shall I do? Where shall I go to escape from him? You always helped me in time past; help me now in my hour of sore need."

"The right to do so is no longer mine," he replied, sadly. "Were I to help you in this delicate matter what would the world say? You must try to make the best of your life as it stands; any attempt on the part of the woman to free herself from the galling fetters of an unhappy marriage generally end in

bringing obloquy upon her name. I can only counsel you to be patient."

"At least will you try to forgive me for my wrong judgment of you in the past?" she said, imploringly.

"I have already forgiven you," he replied, gently, although he was far too loyal to himself and her to allow the pent-up flood of love and tenderness in his heart to find vent in words. "I must leave you now," he continued, "and I cannot tell when it will be our lot to meet again. Meanwhile, strive to bear your cross bravely, and remember that, if you seek it in the right direction, strength will be granted to you."

With various stormy passions contending for the mastery in his breast Kenneth Graham went out from the presence of the woman he still loved, and who had succeeded in vindicating her conduct in his sight. Half-way down the wide stone staircase, guarded by sculptured sphinxes on either side, he met the Comte de Beauville in the act of coming up.

The latter's sang-froid seldom deserted him, but his pale face certainly turned a shade paler on beholding such an unexpected visitor.

"Ah! Mr. Graham," he said, airily, as he held out his hand which the other failed to notice. "To what are we indebted for such a pleasant surprise?"

"Liar and poltroon," returned the barrister, in clear, distinct tones that made themselves heard all too plainly; "mine has been the task to acquaint your wife of the deception you practised upon her previous to her marriage. Go upstairs, and comfort her now if your unblushing villainy will permit of your doing so."

"You have been making mischief between us, then?" he said with a cynical shrug of his expressive shoulders; "but it is in the way of your profession to do that, is it not, mon ami?"

"If you wish to keep a whole skin you will allow me to pass without any further remarks," rejoined Kenneth, with a cynical twinking about the corners of his firmly closed lips.

"Gentlemen do not fight with their fists," said the Comte de Beauville, coolly; "but if you feel yourself aggrieved and wish for satisfaction I shall be happy to meet you to-morrow in the Bois de Boulogne."

"I object on principle to fight a duel," said the other. "In my opinion duelling is only a polite form of murder, sanctioned by man's laws, not by Heaven's. But I will unmask you in the face of society, and let all the world know what muddy channels blue blood may course through, before the end of another week."

"Your moral courage doubtless exceeds your physical daring since you refuse to fight," observed the Comte, with a decided sneer.

The words were hardly out of his mouth ere Kenneth Graham had closed with him, and the two men half-slipped, half-rolled to the bottom of the staircase in a firm embrace. Kenneth was the first to pick himself up, and then the Comte de Beauville knew that he had met his match. The Frenchman did not lack either strength or courage, but he was quite unable to defend himself against the other's vigorous attack. The short, thick cane that Kenneth carried for once in its life saw active service as it descended, time after time, upon the shoulders of his antagonist. Half-a-score of laquays, attracted by the noise, hurried to the assistance of their master, but a single blow from Kenneth's strong arm sent them spinning back against the wall one after another in rapid succession. He had not intended to create such a scene, but his blood was up, and the Comte de Beauville's sneering remarks had done the rest.

Not until he was thoroughly exhausted did he take his departure, leaving the cane behind him as a souvenir of his visit. In his own hotel, with his own servants looking on, had the Comte de Beauville received, as the reward of his marriage, or rather demerits, a sound and well-bestowed thrashing.

He kept his room for several days after that

occurrence, but he could not prevent the humiliating affair from becoming known to the fashionable world, and creating a great deal of amusement. The change in his young wife's manner towards him, however, he deemed the worst blow of all, for it was not likely to heal.

CHAPTER V.

SUNLIGHT and song came flooding into Violet's luxuriously furnished dressing-room one bright spring morning, but they failed to awaken any echo of gladness in her breast. Upon the spirits of a really happy, healthy being such things act like champagne, the mood we are in really swaying us to laughter or tears more than any external influence.

Kenneth Graham's revelation of the treachery to which she had been subjected by her husband and mother had effectually prevented her from trying any longer to cultivate liking a respect for the man whose name she bore, even while she felt a sad satisfaction in knowing that her former lover had never in word or deed been faithless to her.

The Comte de Beauville had recovered from the effects of his thrashing. He strenuously attempted to prevent the most indirect allusion to it, especially when Violet was present, regarding him with serene, contemptuous eyes that he never dared to meet in their clear, steady glance.

Since his dishonourable conduct had become known to her, Violet had at least escaped the annoyance of her husband's ceaseless attentions and imperious claims upon her affections. He could but perceive that love, after what had occurred, was out of the question between them, and he treated her, as a general rule, with distant courtesy, although what it cost him to maintain such an attitude towards her she never knew.

Sometimes, goaded by her silent contempt, he would become passionate and abusive, indulging in all kinds of taunting remarks and reflections; but their usual bearing partook more of well-bred reserve and indifference than anything else.

Lady Montagu had experienced a great deal of uneasiness on hearing of the encounter that had taken place in Paris between her son-in-law and Kenneth Graham.

The interview that the latter insisted on having with her later on, when he demanded the return of his intercepted letters, and reproached her sternly for the part she had played towards him, did not tend to reassure her.

She was thankful to reflect that the channel lay between her and Violet, even while she dreaded the arrival of a letter, echoing Kenneth Graham's reproaches. But Violet proudly refrained from all useless complaint or invective, and Lady Montagu respected her daughter's absolute silence far too much to break it; while she determined to avoid meeting her until the storm had in a measure blown over.

She had cherished the fond delusion that the young barrister, on hearing of Violet's marriage, would efface her image from his heart without more ado, and look in some other direction for a wife. Not once had she thought him capable of exposing her plans and working so much mischief.

Violet sat in front of her glass brooding, as she frequently did now, over the bondage that grew more hateful to her each day that she was called upon to endure it.

A fierce impatience of her present life, and all connected with it, had taken possession of her, and entirely altered the tone of her gentle, tractable nature for the time being. The artless, impulsive, happy girl of days gone by had changed into a lovely woman, whose knowledge of the world had been gained in the school of suffering and experience, where, if the teaching is thorough, the fees are unusually high.

The saddest fate that can befall any human being is that which dooms them to pass their existence in the society of one towards whom

they entertain a sentiment bordering closely upon hatred; and such a fate had befallen Violet, bringing thick and misty gloom into what should have been the glad springtide of her life.

The Comte de Beauville was really the author of all the misery that Kenneth Graham and she herself had been called upon to endure. Yet knowing this, she had to meet him day by day, to go out into society with him, and constantly to endure his presence. The intense longing for freedom that underlay all her icy self-control was working its way to the surface though, and threatened soon to take some definite form. At least it was in her power to go far away from her present home of splendid misery, and, under an assumed name, earn her own living in comparative peace and happiness among strangers.

She was turning the subject over in her mind for the hundredth time, when her maid informed her that a woman, named Marie Durand, wished to see her.

"What does her business with me consist of, Felicie?" inquired the Comtesse.

"She will not say," replied the maid; "but she is most earnest in her request to be admitted to the presence of madame; possibly it is charity that she requires."

"Tell her to come in," said Violet; and then a thin, dark-eyed, middle-aged Frenchwoman, with the wan, earnest *spirituelle* expression so frequently to be seen upon the faces of women belonging to the lower classes in France, entered the room.

"What can I do for you?" inquired Violet kindly, as the door closed upon the retreating figure of the maid.

"Madame is Comtesse, for myself I require nothing," said the woman in that inimitable tone which is at once free, confident, and deferential. "It is for the sake of others that I have tried so hard to gain speech with you this morning upon a matter of life or death. You are, I know, far too good, too noble, to betray the secret that I am about to reveal to you."

"You may confide in me without any fear as to the result," rejoined Violet, wonderingly. What secret of moment could this strange woman have to impart?

"Is it known to you that the Comte de Beauville, your husband, belongs to a secret society called 'Le Rayon du Soleil'?" inquired Marie Durand, eagerly.

"He may belong to the society you mention without my being aware of it," replied Violet, indifferently. "Many of the Comte de Beauville's private affairs are unknown to me."

"The society includes men of every rank in life," continued the Frenchwoman; "and my husband, a small shopkeeper, was, some time ago, persuaded to join it. Of late he has been strangely restless and uneasy in manner, but not until last night did I learn the real cause for his unusual behaviour. Then he talked in his sleep, and I pieced the broken scraps together till the dreadful truth stood clearly revealed to me. The Comte de Beauville has transgressed against the rules of the society, he was proved a traitor to the cause it seeks to propagate, and the penalty is death. They drew lots; it appears, to see who should carry out the sentence, and the lot fell to my husband's share. He is a quiet, peaceable man; and the fact of being compelled to shed blood preys greatly upon his mind."

"Did you ascertain if any time had been appointed for the assassination?" Violet inquired, with a strange gleam as of fire in her dark eyes.

"Yes, the Comte is to be shot to-night on his way home from the opera-house," rejoined her companion. "And now, dearest lady, you who are known to be so good and generous, will you warn him of his danger, and beseech him to leave Paris at once without revealing to him the source from which you have gained your information? Since I have endeavoured to save your husband from death, will you in turn do all you can to shield mine from injury or detection? You will remember that he is bound to obey the commands of the society; if

he would not bring down upon himself a similar sentence."

"I will do the best I can, under the circumstances," said Violet, reassuringly; "and I will certainly keep your husband's name in the background; no harm shall accrue to him through your disclosure. Does he know of your visit to me this morning?"

"Certainly not!" replied Madame Durand. "I feared to increase his perplexity by letting him know that he had unwittingly betrayed such an important secret. I determined to come here on my own responsibility, and do my best to prevent the terrible deed under contemplation from ever taking place."

"And you were quite right; you have acted very wisely, and I am grateful to you for what you have done!" said Violet, taking a small gold cross from her dressing-case as she spoke, and placing it in the other woman's hand. "You must accept this as a little memento of what has just passed between us, and now you may safely leave the whole affair to me. I shall know best how to conduct it."

Marie Durand uttered a few words of heartfelt gratitude, bent down to kiss Violet's hand in her swift, graceful French fashion, and then discreetly vanished from the room. Left to herself, Violet looked the door to prevent interruption, while a sensation of mingled awe and lurid gladness overpowered her, as the means by which her long-desired freedom might speedily be obtained stood plainly revealed before her.

She had but to turn a deaf ear to Marie Durand's statement to let circumstances develop themselves without any interference on her part, and before the dawn of another morning the man who had cheated and tricked her into becoming his wife would have ceased to exist.

To remain passive and inactive, to utter no word of warning to the doomed man, would be merely a negative crime, after all, whispered an evil voice, while his cruel conduct towards her really justified such a reprisal. Did not the freedom for which her soul pined and thirsted depend almost entirely upon it?

But, on the other hand, would not freedom itself, purchased at the cost of one man's death, and the other's crime, eventually become a more terrible bondage than any that she had ever yet known? If trouble not of her own causing was hard to bear, how could she ever sustain such a burden of sin and remorse as must needs descend upon her, if she allowed the Comte de Beauville to go blindly to meet his fate?

Hour after hour she paced restlessly up and down the room, regardless of the flight of time, while hatred and forgiveness, duty and inclination, alternately struggled within her for the mastery.

She was hard pressed, indeed, when the words that Kenneth Graham had spoken on the occasion of their last meeting recurred to her with startling clearness. "Strive to bear your cross bravely, and remember that, if you only seek it in the right direction, strength will be granted unto you."

Tempted, storm-tossed, utterly weary, she threw herself upon her knees and sought that higher aid by means of which so many quiet victories are daily won, while its absence serves to account for so many inglorious defeats.

The struggle was over, and Violet had decided upon her course of action before she rose from that suppliant position. She felt tired and exhausted, for the mental conflict had been a long one; but there was a quiet, restful fervour of peace and happiness within her heart to which she had been a stranger since the days of her untrobbled girlhood.

The Comte de Beauville nearly dropped the ivory-backed brush he held in his hand when his wife entered his dressing-room that evening. Not once a year was she in the habit of paying a visit to her husband's apartments.

"Henri, it will be advisable for you to alter your plans and stay away from the opera to-night," she began, quietly.

"Indeed!" he replied, with a swift, inquiring glance. "It is something new for you to evince any interest in my engagements. May I ask why you wish me to lose such a good representation of *Faust*, with Nillson as *Marquerite, ma belle femme*?"

"Because, if you go, it will be at the risk of your life," she continued, briefly explaining the plot against him that had been brought under her notice, but taking care to suppress the names of those immediately concerned in it. The Comte de Beauville's face grew deadly pale as she proceeded. He knew the full extent of the danger that surrounded him.

"That cursed society again," he muttered, peevishly. "How I wish that I had never joined it. I shall have to leave Paris at once, since those fellows have got their knife into me for betraying some of their far-fetched impossible plans, and bringing them under the notice of the Government. How did this news reach you?" he continued, turning sharply upon his wife.

"I am not at liberty to reveal the name of my informant," she rejoined. "In return for the information given, I promised to keep that strictly secret."

"I wonder that you, of all people, should exert yourself to rescue me from such an undesirable fate," he remarked, with an unpleasant smile. "You care less than nothing for me, and my death would serve to release you from a marriage that you have always more or less disliked."

"You have forfeited all right to expect either love or liking from me," said Violet, proudly; "but when everything else has been blown to the winds, duty between a husband and wife still remains. Hence the warning that you have just received from my lips; no other motive would have induced me to open them."

He regarded her for a moment in mute amazement; a woman who placed duty before everything else was a new revelation to him.

"Yours is a noble nature, Violet," he remarked, in a less mocking tone, "and I wish from my heart that you cared more for me. Are we always to remain apart by reason of the deception I helped to practise upon you previous to our marriage? Cannot you afford to overlook it when you remember the passionate love that prompted me to sacrifice even my honour rather than allow you to drift away from me for ever?"

"Love without honour is but a poor gift to place at any woman's feet," said Violet, as she turned to depart. "The past contains that which must always serve as a barrier between us, although I shall continue to fill my position as your wife, and discharge the duties that position entails upon me to the best advantage."

The Comte de Beauville did not go to the opera that night, and he left Paris early the next morning, thereby exonerating Marie Durand's husband from the painful task imposed upon him by his superiors.

Meanwhile in England things were not going very well with Kenneth Graham. Intense application to work as a remedy against useless regrets and memories full of pain, nightly brews of strong green tea, and the excessive use of wet towels, had resulted in a serious attack of brain fever. As he slowly crept back to life and consciousness it was only to ascertain from the doctor that many months must yet elapse ere he handled another brief, while his enfeebled brain would prevent him from attacking anything more abstruse than a three-volume novel. The fickle world was already beginning to forget him, other men were crowding into his vacant place, and his cup of bitterness fairly ran over when the birth of Lord Fossilton's son and heir was announced to him at the request of that ancient and highly delighted nobleman through the useful medium of the penny post.

CHAPTER VI.

It is possible for a man to be brave as a lion in one respect, and yet at the same time to be guilty of absolute cowardice in another. The

Comte de Beauville's state of mind subsequent to the unpleasant warning conveyed to him by his wife served to prove the truthfulness of this assertion beyond the reach of doubt.

It would have troubled him but little had he been called upon to fight a duel with another man, or even to meet an acknowledged enemy openly upon the field of battle. But the knowledge that a slouching, determined, stealthy figure might be following him wherever he went, waiting its opportunity to take his life, not from any motive of personal hatred or revenge, but as the instrument used by calm, passionless, abstract justice to accomplish its ends, told fearfully upon his nerves, as the long, glowing days of summer fleet by.

Such a mysterious, shadowy foe could not be grappled with, or even guarded against. The attack must perforce come when it was least expected, and the vague uncertainty, the constant dread connected with it, rendered it doubly harassing.

Never caring to remain long in one place, he bade fair to become a "globe-trotter" of the most approved type. As a rule, he shunned the great cities, and chose out-of-the-way towns and villages for his temporary residence, until Violet thought there could hardly be a dreamy, old-world, shadow-haunted look upon the continent still unknown to them.

And yet so where he would the Comte de Beauville was obliged to acknowledge to himself the futile nature of all his precautions against discovery. Had he not sat in the council from which his own sentence had proceeded helping to judge others? Could he fail to remember with what vigilant, unwearied skill and deliberate purpose each marked man had been traced by the emissaries of the society and sent to his last account? It was but a matter of time, he told himself, sometimes with a shrug, and yet he did his utmost to extend the span of life still remaining to him by throwing his enemies off the scent and doubling, like some hunted thing, when the yelling pack is close upon it.

One benefit at least had accrued to him since his banishment from Paris, owing to the fiat issued against him by the secret society. Violet perceiving the wretchedness of the life he was compelled to lead, and the effect it produced upon him, grew kinder and less reserved in her bearing towards him. Urged by compassion she strove to aid and reassure the husband she had never loved, as the dread of assassination grew yet stronger upon him, and he was grateful to her for the forgiveness and clemency thus displayed.

He became suspicious of almost everyone with whom the course of daily life brought him in contact. His young wife, upon whom he had once practised such a cruel piece of deceit, was the only being that he allowed himself to place absolute confidence in; her fidelity had been proved beyond the reach of doubt.

Violet assented to all his frequently altered plans, and after wandering from place to place for nearly a year, living meanwhile in a chronic state of packing and unpacking, much to the disgust of Violet's French maid, the Comte expressed a desire to revisit Nice, then in the full glory of its flower-crowned summer. They had only been there a week when he fell ill of a low, nervous fever, the result of a long-continued mental strain and unrest.

A vigorous constitution might have surmounted such an illness, but the Comte de Beauville had abused his in years gone by, and he had no reserve fund of strength to fall back upon in time of sickness. The doctors who were called in looked grave, and gave provokingly ambiguous answers to all questions put to them by Violet regarding the patient's condition. He might recover, they said, but the fever had taken such firm hold of him that the result was extremely doubtful.

The Comte de Beauville's clear, penetrating sense, that it was so difficult to hoodwink, alone told him that he was dying. Indirectly the secret society had effected its purpose, and

the easy, luxurious life that he loved so well was slipping away from him hour by hour.

One day, when the fever had reduced him to a mere shadow of his former self, Violet sat by her husband's bedside, watching him as he lay there in troubled, unquiet sleep. She was in constant attendance upon him now, since he looked to her for everything, and grew fretful if she absented herself from him for ever so short a time.

He roused her from the sad reverie into which she had fallen by starting up suddenly in bed, and exclaiming,—

"Violet, Violet, why don't you drive them away? They won't go at my bidding. Don't you see them standing there, with that hateful smile of triumph on their evil faces? They will madden me! Why do you let them stand all round the bed waiting for the end? Have you no pity, that you can look calmly on without making an effort to rescue me from them?"

"There is nothing here to alarm you, Henri," she said, soothingly, as she took his hot, dry hand in her own soft, cool one. "You have been dreaming, and your sick fancy has conjured up all those dreadful phantoms."

"Perhaps so," he replied, a little ashamed of the emotion he had displayed, as consciousness reassured itself within him; "but it was a fearful dream. Violet, my old nurse, a peasant woman, brimful of quaint fancies and superstitions, once told me that when a man is about to die, all the deeds of his past life take bodily form and stand around him—the good deeds as angels, the bad ones as demons. I thought just now that the events of my life had taken personal shape, and were gathering round me; but there were no angels among them. No, not one!"

Full of pity and compassion Violet strove to relieve him, and to draw his spirit up to those pure heights that she herself had reached by means of earnest, helpful, persuasive words. He listened to all that she said without making any sarcastic comment upon it.

"You are the only star that lightens the darkness of my life, Violet," he remarked, presently. "I won you by unfair means, but you have never failed in allegiance or wifely duty towards me, and when I am gone you will find that I have done what little I could to atone for the wrong inflicted upon you in the past. You cannot hide the truth from me. I know that I am dying, and that I have made a fatal mistake in living for self and the world alone. The last page has been turned, and there is nothing more to be done save to write 'Finis' at the bottom of it."

He fell asleep again with Violet's hand still firmly clasped in his, and Violet, worn out by constant vigils, felt herself growing dull and drowsy. She made an effort to keep herself awake, but tired nature asserted its rights in spite of her, and her head fell back against the cushions of her chair in deep, dreamless slumber.

When she awoke she was in her own room, with the sun streaming in dusty beams through the bars of the green venetian blind, and the scent of lilac and mignonette from the garden below pervading the breeze that kissed her forehead.

"How did I come here?" she said, quickly, as she rose from the couch on which they had placed her. "Why did you remove me from the sick room, Felicie?"

"There, madame, the Comte de Beauville is no more," replied the woman, with a sob. "He passed away quietly enough in his sleep, and we had not the heart to wake you, you were so weary. Alas! it seems but the other day that you were married, and he stood by you looking so handsome, so gallant, so devoted, and now he is dead!"

Freedom had at length been granted to Violet, freedom that she could avail herself of without a shadow of remorse.

Lady Montagu was in town when the news of her son-in-law's death reached her, and, without being requested to do so, she im-

mediately started for Nice to join her daughter.

No better opportunity for a reconciliation between them would ever occur, she told herself, triumphantly. Now that Violet was enjoying the fruits of her mother's deep-laid scheme in the shape of the Comte de Beauville's ample fortune, without the drawback of the individual himself, she could surely afford to pardon such an exemplary parent for any sentimental sorrow inflicted upon her for her own good at an earlier period.

Her ladyship was somewhat taken aback though by Violet's cool greeting, and the absence of all demonstrative woe that distinguished her from other mourners.

She had quite expected to find a very helpless orthodox young widow, existing in an atmosphere of tears and black crape, who would require to be taken in tow by a clever, managing mother, proud to own the rich and lovely Comtesse as her child, and not unwilling to assume the direction of her affairs.

It hardly pleased her so well to be confronted instead by a graceful, self-possessed woman, clad in simple black, her coils of wavy brown hair undisfigured by any monument of ugliness in the shape of a widow's cap.

"You need hardly have put yourself to the fatigue of such a long, tiring journey, mamma," Violet remarked, as they sat opposite to each other in the pretty drawing-room. "I have managed very well, so far; and now that the funeral is over and the will read little remains to be done."

"My dear child, do you suppose that any amount of fatigue would prevent me from doing my duty, especially on such a mournful occasion as the present one?" said Lady Montagu, effusively. "Who more fit to be with you in your hour of bereavement than your own mother? I should have been here before only I stayed in Paris for a day or two, just to get some decent mourning dresses from Worth's."

Violet's delicate upper-lip curled almost imperceptibly as she heard the cause that had served to delay her sympathetic parent on the road.

"Mamma, I think it will be best for us to come to an understanding with each other at once," she said, firmly. "I am acquainted with the part you took in separating me from Kenneth Graham, and palming off a falsehood upon me in order to serve your own ends with the assistance of one now dead. I have forgiven him, I am also willing to forgive you; but we can never again be to each other what many who stand in the same relation can claim to be, with regard to mutual love and confidence. All that is at an end for ever."

"You are an ungrateful girl," replied her ladyship, indignantly. "But for me you would not be occupying your present enviable position, and if your obstinate attachment to that unfortunate young barrister compelled me to resort to subterfuge in order to get you married to the Comte de Beauville you were the most to blame. A pretty thing it would have been for you had you become Mrs. Graham, the wife of a professional man who is now suffering from softening of the brain, or some dreadful thing of that kind. You ought to thank me for what I did then instead of using such wicked, undutiful expressions."

"I cannot thank you for changing the current of my life sorely against my will, and causing me years of misery," said her daughter, sadly, "and I would far rather have married Kenneth Graham, my first and only love, in spite of either poverty or sickness awaiting us in the future. But it is worse than useless to dwell any longer upon such topics."

"Of course you will return to England with me, for the present, pending the legal business that may not be settled for some months to come," remarked her ladyship authoritatively.

"No," replied Violet, "I have already formed my plans, and I cannot alter them. I have been sorely tried of late, and I need rest

for both mind and body, more complete rest and retirement than I could possibly have in Park-lane. I am going as a boarder to my old convent-school near Brussels. They have willingly agreed to take me, and I start to-morrow for the dear old place where some of my happiest days were spent."

"Perhaps when you are there you will take the veil," said Lady Montagu, with angry irony, mortified beyond measure to learn how completely her daughter had passed away from her control. "You seem to manage your affairs so even without aid or advice from those most intimately connected with you."

"No, I shall not take the veil," returned Violet, calmly. "I only want time to recruit my shattered nerves and health in perfect seclusion before taking up my proper position in the world again."

"It is a ridiculous idea," said her mother stiffly, "but I suppose you must be allowed to do as you like now. By the way, Violet, your husband, as you are perhaps aware, was generous enough to add five hundred a-year to my ridiculously small income during his lifetime. I am naturally anxious to know if his death will cause any difference, or serve to alter existing arrangements."

"No, not where you are concerned," replied Violet. "Any advantages that you have hitherto reaped from my marriage, mamma, you will continue to enjoy. I have it in my power to promise you this."

"And a great deal besides," thought Lady Montagu, as she swept away to her room, feeling both indignant and disappointed at the unexpected turn affairs had taken. "He has left her enormously rich, and she may just as well pay Worth for those dresses I ordered of him the other day. The dress she is wearing herself might have been put together by the coachman, for all the style there is in it."

CHAPTER VII.

FAITHFUL to her word Violet betook herself on the following day to the white-walled convent near Brussels, standing in the centre of its large shady flower-scented garden—a little world apart from that larger one in which she had gained so much dearly-bought experience.

Violet had always been a favourite with the Reverend Mother and the Sisters during her school-days, and now they petted and made much of her as a boarder. The calm, peaceful consecrated life they led, with its simple round of duties and relaxations, tended to soothe and strengthen her weary spirit, and prepare her once more to take her part in the active throbbing drama of existence going on beyond the convent walls.

The Comte de Beauville had done what he could to recompense her for past injuries by making Violet one of the richest widows in France. Two of his estates and a princely income were bequeathed to her in his will, to the profound and loudly-expressed indignation of the de Beauville family, who were compelled to look on and see themselves robbed, as they termed it, by an Englishwoman who had gained such an ascendancy over their deceased relative by means of her lovely face and soft, winning ways. The true version of the story was never revealed to them, and so they enjoyed their own highly original one to the end.

Violet had not been long at the convent when she received a visit from the Marchioness of Creamshire. That kind-hearted, stately old dame had never ceased to evince a deep interest in her godchild's welfare, and she gladly availed herself of such a good opportunity for a long uninterrupted conversation with the young widow.

Inquiries after mutual acquaintances, and a detailed account of all the events that had transpired since their last meeting, kept them fully occupied at first. Then the question that had so long been hovering upon Violet's lips found vent in words.

"Do you know if Mr. Graham is better?"

she inquired, falteringly. "I have not read anything about him in the papers lately."

"He is better, poor fellow," said the Marchioness compassionately, "but he is still far from being strong or well. I want to see him the other day before leaving home, and I found him a perfect wreck, quite unable as yet to resume his professional work, which is falling sadly in arrears. He was always a favourite of mine, you know," she continued, "and your mother and I have never been quite so friendly together, Violet, since she gave him his *conge* in such a peremptory manner when he was no longer heir to his uncle's title and estate. You were very young at the time, but I think you were wrong in allowing yourself to be so easily persuaded into renouncing your first lover."

"I was not persuaded, I was duped, deceived, misled," she replied, sorrowfully; "otherwise I should have remained true to Kenneth Graham, and our lives would not have been the severed, blighted, unsatisfactory things they are now. Do not judge me until you know all."

The Marchioness listened intently to Violet's account of her second engagement, and the various motives that had led up to her marriage with the Comte de Beauville. When it came to an end she drew the slender girlish form nearer to her, with a motherly, pitying air that Lady Montagu was incapable of assuming, while she kissed the sweet tremulous upturned face.

"My poor child," she said, gently, "you have, indeed, been the victim of other people's unprincipled schemes. And yet I am glad to know that you did not willingly inflict so much pain upon Kenneth Graham when you rejected him in favour of the Comte de Beauville. It always perplexed and grieved me to think of such cruel, mercenary conduct in connection with my little Violet. It seems hard, indeed, that another barrier should have arisen between you in place of the one just removed."

"What do you mean? Is Mr. Graham about to be married?" said Violet, quickly.

"Oh, dear, no, marriage is about the last idea likely to occur to him," rejoined the elder woman, with a smile. "I allude to your large fortune, Violet, which must always prevent you from coming together as man and wife. Kenneth Graham is far too proud to marry anyone possessed of more wealth than he can lay claim to himself, especially when that wealth formerly belonged to a successful rival. I ventured to sound him upon the subject, and I found him inexorable."

"I ought not so much as to think of forming fresh ties yet," said Violet, with a vivid blush; "but, dear godmother, don't you fancy that after a time he will relent and woo me again, in spite of my fortune, if he really cares for me?"

"I fear that it will always be a stumbling-block in the way of your happiness," said the Marchioness, dubiously. "He will never be persuaded to overlook it. It may seem an extreme thing to say, but I almost wish that you had been left poor instead of rich at your husband's death; then Kenneth would have sought you out at once, and I believe that he only requires some lasting stimulus to restore him to health and strength again."

The Marchioness of Creamshire's visit supplied Violet with plenty of food for reflection, and it was remarked by the inmates of the convent that she became unusually quiet and thoughtful after it, as if she were revolving some important project in her mind.

Sorrow and suffering had tended to quell her former high spirits, and make her feel prematurely grave and old. But one day, as she stood in the sunlit garden, gathering great sheaves of fragrant dew-drenched white lilies for a church festival, it smote upon her like a sudden revelation that she was still in the very heyday of youth and health. Happiness might yet be waiting for her somewhere in the golden future—happiness rich and deep enough to make her forget the mournful past.

The bright sunshine, the fresh morning breeze, the waving boughs all seemed to impress the glad fact upon her. It was like drinking in a deep draught of joyous new life; and she never forgot that wonderful moment.

The quiet routine of the convent began to pull upon her, and her health being thoroughly recruited, Violet took leave of the sheltering home and the kindly hearts it contained, and returned to England for the first time since her marriage.

For the sake of peace and quietness she made her home with Lady Montagu in Park-lane. On the day after her return she went alone to the office of Messrs. Mitchell and H-yward, the family solicitors, and had a long interview with the principal. To that good, but short-tempered man she unfolded a proposition that would have caused his hair to stand on end had he not for several years past been in the habit of wearing one of Trenchard's most elaborate wigs.

Kenneth Graham, looking wearily out through the windows of the sitting-room in the Temple, had just arrived at the conclusion that life for him was as dull and grey an affair as the murky sky overhead. He could neither die nor get well; legal work was out of the question; when his head ached and became confused it was attempted anything that required close thought and steady attention, while the very wish to recover, save for the sake of regaining his own prestige, had been taken from him with Violet.

He was leaning forward, in a drooping, despondent attitude, one thin white hand supporting his head, and "Sartor Resartus" lying neglected at his feet, when the door opened gently, and Violet entered the room.

To his astonished eyes her bright, delicate beauty looked more flower-like than ever, owing to the soft, dark dress, flushed off at throat and wrist with creamy lace ruffles, that she wore.

"Violet!" he exclaimed, electrified into sudden animation, "My Violet!"

And then, before either of them knew exactly what had happened, she was kneeling beside him, while his arm encircled her in a tender, silent embrace.

"You ought not to have come," he said, as though half-ashamed to think how the delightful fact of her presence had thrown him off his guard; "Violet, my love, this brief spell of intense happiness can only lead to the pain of another parting between us."

"Why must we part again?" she inquired, calmly, while that long, muscular arm still encircled her slender waist, and Kenneth felt that she was making hay of all his stern resolutions.

"Your large fortune and my wretched health are the impediments in our way," he said, sadly but firmly. "Dear, it will be better for us to live far apart since friends we cannot be, and lovers we may not be through the force of circumstance."

"Your health will soon improve when I am your nurse," rejoined Violet, with a smile full of hidden meaning. "As to the other obstacle, my fortune, surely you don't consider the four hundred a year left to me by a maiden aunt a very disproportionate income; your own is far in advance of it, sir."

"Four hundred a year!" he repeated incredulously. "I thought your husband had left you nearly the whole of his large fortune to you, Violet."

"Perhaps he did!" she continued. "Perhaps, having heard from a real friend that a certain high-principled barrister had refused to be recommended to me on account of my money-bags, I made arrangements to return them all to the de Beauville family, who will be only too glad to accept them, merely stipulating that they should continue to pay the five hundred a year to my mother that she has been in receipt of ever since my marriage. For myself I have kept back nothing, in order to render our reunion possible. Kenneth, are you pleased with me for what I have done?"

"The sacrifice is too great; I cannot allow

you to make it for my sake!" he said, brokenly; but there were tears of happiness in his grey eyes the while. It is so sweet to find the one you love willing to sacrifice all in turn for the love of you.

"But it is all sealed, signed, and settled," she replied, decisively. "Dear old Mitchell nearly went into a fit over it. He could not understand such a wild freak on the part of his wealthy client. You see, Kenneth, that I am not to be got rid of on any terms."

"I am such a wreck," he began, reluctantly. "Shall I be justified in permitting you to share my altered life? My cause is a sorry one, Violet, for I am compelled to plead against my own happiness."

"Be brief, then," she retorted, lightly. "I am retained for the defence, and I mean to gain the day. I know that you will recover, Kenneth; at least, you will try to do so when your life means so much to me, and until then it will be my delight to act both as nurse and doctor to you. I warn you that I shall adopt the kill-or-cure system. I have a theory to the effect that women doctors are far more practical than their male brethren. Are you willing to embrace my theory?"

"I would much rather embrace you," he replied, suiting the action to the word. "Violet, after all that you have renounced on my account I cannot put from me the joy for which I have so long hungered, the joy, above all others, of calling you my wife. And since we are to come together let it be soon—bachelor freedom has lost all charm for me."

"It, I mean our marriage, shall take place whenever you like," said Violet, with downcast eyes. "Oh, Kenneth, how much we have to be grateful for when we remember that some longing hearts have been compelled to dwell apart in sorrow and silence for ever."

After their marriage, at which Lady Montagu condescended to be present, Kenneth Graham and his bride started for Wales on their wedding tour. Mountain air, good diet, a devoted nurse, and last, but not least, a mind free from care and trouble, did wonders for the young barrister in restoring him to health and vigour. His opening speech in the first *cause célèbre* after his long illness astonished even himself. In concise, logical argument, persuasive eloquence, and pungent wit, it far surpassed all his previous triumphs of oratory. Once more his feet were firmly planted on the high-road that leads to fame and fortune.

"Richard's himself again," he said to his fair young wife, who had been present when the speech in question was delivered. "I feel that I have only to go in and win. You shall be Lady Graham yet, Violet, if titles are to be won by those who work hard to obtain them."

"Never mind the title," she replied, as she stood on tip-toe to kiss her tall husband. "I could not possibly be prouder of my dear old boy than I am at present. Oh, Kenneth, how wise you were, when, instead of waiting for old Lord Fossiter's gonty shoes, you determined to make your own."

"And love supplied the leather," said Kenneth, laughingly, as side by side they descended the wide staircase to welcome the guests who were even then assembling under their hospitable roof.

[THE END.]

FACETTE.

How to serve a dinner—Eat it.

In what way does money resemble gunpowder?—It is awfully hard to hold after it begins to go off.

SCENE.—Front of a millinery establishment. Tam: "Hallo, Georgie! wha's yer hurry?" Georgie (holding up a box): "This is a bonnet for the wife, and I'm hurrying awa' home wi' it afore it gae out o' fashion!"

LADY: "Before I engage you, I should like to know what your religion is." Crok: "Oh, ma'am, I always feels it my duty to be of the same religion as the family I'm in!"

A CELEBRATED WIT was asked why he did not marry a young lady to whom he was much attached. "I know not," he replied, "except the great regard we have for each other."

AN AUDACIOUS DOCTOR.—A doctor obliged himself to cure a man's wife, but failed. "You said that you would cure her!" exclaimed the indignant husband. "Yes, I said so," "Well, why didn't you?" "Why, my dear sir, because she died. If she hadn't died the chances are that she would have lived."

MULTIPLICATION.—A few days ago a teacher, who is rather high-flown in his remarks, informed his scholars that he did not desire them to occupy too much space with small examples in arithmetic, and asked one of them if he was working "compactly." "No, sir," replied the lad, "I am working multiplication."

At an evening school for adults in Hornsey, "the horse" was given to the pupils as a subject of composition. An agricultural cottager—one of those who will shortly have a vote—set to work with a will, and executed the following:—"The ors is the noblist of anermals and so is the kow. If you bit im he won't do it. The ors has four legs i in each corner. Finis."

THE LAST THING TO FORGET.—A workman started at noon for his dinner, and finding a few feet of pavement to lay near his home, laid it, and then returned to his place of business. He had forgotten something, he knew not what. He explored his pockets, and taxed his memory, and at length he concluded that it must be nails. He made a memorandum to stop to buy some at night, and then felt relieved. At about four o'clock a rush of memory came upon him—he had forgotten to eat his dinner.

RATHER TOO PLAIN.—A not very handsome elderly maiden was boring a young fellow with some sort of explanation or other, and he was crazy to talk to a pretty girl on the other side of the room. Finally she said: "Do I make myself plain?" "Well, Miss Sarah, I believe you do." "Be sure of it, because I want to do so." "Really, Miss Sarah, I should say you are about as plain as any woman I ever saw." Then he went over to the other girl.

"WHAT WOULD HE DO WHEN SORER?"—Lord Justice Hermand possessed one of those peculiarly tough Scotch organizations which no amount of excess in eating or drinking appeared to affect. With him wine-drinking was a virtue; he had a singular respect for that man who could sit with him and empty bottle after bottle without flinching. For those unfortunates who drank to intoxication he expressed sincerest compassion, while his deep disgust was given to those who would not drink at all. No carouse ever seemed to harm him, for he was never ill, nor did it impair his love for the quiet of his home. His head was never muddled, and in his old age he slept like a child, and yet, through a long life, he often went direct from his club in the morning to the court. Once upon a time Hermand was trying a man, at Edinburgh, who had killed a friend in a drunken fray. Some of his associates were in favour of leniency, sympathizing with the poor man because he had been under the influence of liquor at the time; but his lordship insisted upon transportation. He felt that the wretch had brought discredit upon drinking. Said he, when he arose to speak: "We are told that there was no malice—that the prisoner was in liquor. In liquor! Why, he was drunk! And yet he murdered the very man who had been drinking with him! They had been carousing the whole night through, yet he stabbed him after drinking more than a full bottle of rum with him. Good Heavens! my lairds! if he will do this when he's drunk, what will he not do when he is sober!"

SOCIETY.

THE QUEEN takes, it is said, an active interest in the preparation of the English edition of "The Letters of the Princess Alice," and that the death of the Duke of Albany will delay the publication of the book, probably till autumn.

THE Crown Prince and Princess of Austria, with their suite, have left Vienna on their journey to Constantinople and the east of Europe. The extensive preparations made at Constantinople for the reception of the Austrian Heir-Apparent and the Archduchess are nearly completed. A small palace has been constructed and furnished for them in the park adjoining the Imperial palace, and a long new street has been made to facilitate communication between the Austrian Embassy and the upper portion of Pera. In Broussa a palace has been repaired and furnished anew for their convenience, and a large sum has been expended in repairing the road between Broussa and Mondakia.

COLONEL FRED BURNARD arrived in London recently, and has rejoined the Horse Guards Blue at Windsor. The gallant colonel had to voyage and travel home by easy and painful stages from the latest seat of war. He wears his arm in a sling, but, though weak from the effects of his wound, he is in fairly good health.

THE marriage of Mr. Alexander Cockburn, eldest son of Mr. Frederick Cockburn, the Queen's counsel and attorney, and Miss Louise Dalrymple Sandys, daughter of the late Lieutenant-General Sandys, Madras Light Cavalry, took place on March 25, at Christ Church, Coombe and Malden. The ceremony was performed by the Rev. Charles Sterling, vicar. The bridegroom was accompanied by his brother as best man. The bride, who was given away by her brother, Captain Sandys, wore a dress of white duchesse satin with train, the trimming being a flounce of fine old Brussels point, the gift of her mother, arranged across the front of the skirt; wreath of orange blossoms, and tulle veil. She carried a bouquet, the gift of the bridegroom. The four bridesmaids were dressed in white silk, two pink and grey, two dark and pale blue; bonnets and hats to match. They carried baskets of gardenia, lily-of-the-valley, and Marshal Niel roses. After the ceremony a few relatives and friends were entertained at a breakfast by the bride's mother.

THE marriage of Mr. Walter Goldschmidt, eldest son of Mr. Otto G. and Mme. Lind-Goldschmidt, with Mary Julia, eldest daughter of Colonel James Le Geyt Daniell, was a very stylish affair. The church of St. Mary's, Bolton, South Kensington, which was beautifully decorated with flowers for Easter, was filled with relatives and friends of the contracting couple long before two o'clock, which was the hour appointed for the marriage. The bridegroom was attended by his brother, Mr. Ernest Goldschmidt, as best man, and the bride was followed by four bridesmaids, the youngest of whom (the bride's niece), with her mother, acted as a train-bearer. The bride, leaning on the arm of her father, who afterwards gave her away, entered the church a few minutes after two o'clock, and a nuptial hymn was sung as the bridal procession passed up the aisle.

The bride wore a dress of cream satin, trimmed with Honiton lace, sprays of orange blossoms in the hair, being covered by a tulle veil; her ornaments were diamonds. The bridesmaids were not all dressed alike; the two eldest wore costumes of yellow cashmere and lace, with large hats to match, and carried bouquets of azaleas and white lilac; the third was in white muslin trimmed with lace, and wore a yellow sash; and the fourth was in cream cashmere trimmed with coffee lace, and wore a cream satin bonnet. Master Victor Maude, the bride's nephew, who assisted in carrying her train, wore a page's costume of black velvet, with ruffles of point lace.

STATISTICS.

NATIONAL EXPENDITURE ON PAPER AND PRINTING.—The original estimate of the Stationery Office for the year expiring on the 31st December was £589,110, or £10,000 in excess of the sum similarly expended during the financial year 1882-83. The supplementary estimate now submitted for the same department represents a further sum of £30,629, thus bringing up the total disbursements of the Stationery Office to £569,736. About two-thirds of the amount of the supplementary vote asked for is on account of the General Post-office and the Patent Office, the excesses being due to the introduction of the Parcel Post, and to the passing of the new Patent Act respectively. Let it not, however, be supposed that the before-mentioned sum represents the total outlay of the Government on account of paper and print; for a number of Civil Service departments arrange for their own printing, independently of the Stationery Office; and their expenditure under this head may, broadly speaking, be put down as £243,000, thus giving a gross total of £812,739. The import of these figures will be better realised when we mention that the civil administration of this country involves an expenditure on account of paper and printing nearly equal to one-third of the total national revenue of the kingdom of Denmark.

GEMS.

HE that sips of many arts, drinks of none. HAPPINESS is like the statue of Isis, whose veil no mortal ever raised.

SINCERITY is the way to heaven. To think how to be sincere is the way of man.

LIVE on what you have; live if you can on less; do not borrow, for vanity will end in shame.

THERE is nothing that so goads a spirited woman to madness as the realization that any man controls her husband.

A MAN should live with his superiors as he does with his fire; not too near, lest he burn; nor too far off, lest he freeze.

EVERY man's work, pursued steadily, tends to become an end in itself, and so bridges over the loveless chasms of his life.

THE coin that is most current among mankind is flattery, the only benefit of which is that by hearing what we are not we may be instructed what we ought to be.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

POTATO SOUP.—Peel and slice potatoes, boil them in a mash, rub all through a coarse sieve, and stir them into boiling water to the approved thickness. Add a piece of butter, salt, and chopped parsley, chervil, or any other herb. When taken off the fire stir in the yolks of a few eggs that have been beaten with a little cream or milk, and serve with sippets or dice of toasted bread, either in the tureen or dry.

FISH SOUP.—Use any kind of fish. Wash well, and set it on the fire in cold water, enough to cover it. Add a small stick of celery, an onion or two, a few sprigs of parsley, a bay leaf, six cloves, and a spray of ginger. Cover close, and leave it to simmer an hour, then add sufficient water for the requisite quantity of soup. Let it boil up together, strain it; add a cup of cream, and salt and white pepper to taste. Fry as many eggs in butter as the number at table may require, lay them in the tureen; pour over the soup, and serve with toasted bread. Or, grate a number of cold boiled potatoes, and add them to the soup. Beat some eggs well with twice their measure of cream or milk and a little nutmeg; stir it into the soup, and let it boil up. Serve with slices of toasted bread.

MISCELLANEOUS.

"SWISS gendarmes ready cooked, at sixty centimes the pair," is the startling announcement on several of the booths now lining the Paris Boulevards for the annual Ham fair. These "gendarmes," however, are only a mysterious compound of pork, &c., among the other curious eatables derived from the pig tribe, which are sold on this occasion.

THE heat in South Australia this year has been abnormal, and one Sunday in particular, not far from Port Augusta, the wild birds flocked to the farmers' houses to find shelter and water, many expiring even after their thirst had been quenched. One little girl spent a day refreshing the wild birds with water from a spoon, larks and magpies flocking round her as tamely as domestic fowls.

AN innovation in the education of Eastern women is to be introduced at Constantinople, where a day-school is to be established for instructing girls in useful arts and trades, under the Sultan's especial patronage. The fee will be nominal, as 200 scholars will be admitted on payment of nine shillings a month, another 100 being taught free.

THE INTERNATIONAL HEALTH EXHIBITION.—A somewhat novel feature in connection with the Exhibition this year will be the establishment of a library and reading-room, a home for which the Executive Council have assigned in a large double room in the Albert Hall, overlooking the conservatory. Steps have been taken to secure a representative collection of works on vital statistics, of reports and regulations relating to public health; of regulations with reference to injurious trades and works thereon; and of reports, statistics, and other works on the science of education. Foreign powers have been invited to lend their co-operation in this effort to create an international library.

THE NIGHTINGALE'S SONG.—In the Century for March John Burroughs describes his "Hunt for the Nightingale" in England, with the following result of an almost fruitless chase: "When my patience was about exhausted, I was startled by a quick, brilliant call or whistle, a few rods from me, that at once recalled my barber with his blade of grass; and I knew my long sought bird was initiating her throat. How it woke me up! It had the quality that startles; it pierced the gathering gloom like a rocket. Then it ceased. Suspecting I was too near the singer, I moved away cautiously, and stood in a lone beside the wood, where a loping hare regarded me a few paces away. Then my singer struck up again, but I could see she did not let herself out; just tuning her instrument, I thought, and getting ready to transfix the silence and the darkness. A little later, a man and boy came up the lane. I asked them if that was the nightingale singing; they listened, and assured me it was none other. 'Now she's on, sir; now she's on. Ah! but she don't stick. In May, sir, they makes the woods all hercho about here. Now she's on again; that's her, sir; now she's off; she won't stick.' And stick she would not. I could hear a hoarse wheezing and clucking sound beneath her notes, when I listened intently. The man and boy moved on. I stood motionless invoking all the gentle divinities to spur the bird on. Just then a bird like our hermit thrush came quickly over the hedge a few yards below me, swept close past my face, and back into the thicket. I had been caught listening; the offended bird had found me taking notes of her dry and worn-out pipe, there behind the hedge, and the concert abruptly ended; not another note; not a whisper. I waited a long time, and then moved off; then came back, implored the outraged bird to resume; then rushed off and, as it were, slammed the door indignantly behind me. I paused by other shrines, but not a sound."

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

R. B.—You can get the platina from some wholesale dealer.

K. T. A.—Your penmanship is not quite up to the average, but it can be greatly improved by practice.

R. W. D.—There are no methods by which the object may be gained without exposing both parties to danger.

LILLY L.—1. Your birthday—December 28, 1871—came on a Thursday. 2. Penmanship is very good for a thirteen-year-old girl.

S. J. T.—1. Light auburn hair. 2. Consult a physician concerning your eyes. It may be that the lids are diseased.

MILLIE B.—You are foolish to allow yourself to be annoyed by this trifling matter. Pay no heed to it. It is of no consequence.

DORA.—Cut his acquaintance till he can learn to behave like a man. His conduct, as you describe it, is intolerably boyish.

VIOLETTA.—You had better come to no immediate decision, as you are too young to marry. Your feeling for the gentleman may ripen into love.

RHODA.—1. After being refined, it is used for many purposes besides that of illumination. 2. Wednesday, December 19, 1880.

P. F.—You can invite the gentleman to call upon you, and thus give him an opportunity to make himself more agreeable. You should confide fully in your mother and get her assistance.

FRED S.—The lady is probably waiting for you to propose. Show more enterprise and push your suit. There is no obstacle to your success but your own lack of spirit.

PEP.—If he can afford it, it is the duty of your betrothed to gratify you in the matter of amusements, then he would have no reason to complain of you. Your engagement is probably premature.

C. G.—1. It is not considered proper for a stranger to interfere with family matters, and consequently we cannot be expected to express an opinion for or against your husband. 2. Very neat handwriting.

ANNETTA.—The reason why your wall paper cracks and peels off is either that it is exposed to dampness or the wall was not scraped and sised, which must always be done before putting paper on whitewashed walls.

ROSE K.—The term "Orphan" is applied alike to a child who has lost both father and mother, or to one who is bereaved of but one parent. Consequently neither one of the disputing parties is in error.

H. R. L.—It will depend on the terms of the holding. If it is from year to year, the landlord can hold you responsible for the rent until the expiration of the year, which seems to be the case in this instance.

BESSIE.—It may be wise to wait a little and see if your lover's fortune may not improve with time. His youth and poverty are not serious obstacles to a happy union.

AVONDALE.—Yes. The same amount of force that sent the ball up would operate inversely in bringing it down. As it went up its velocity would decrease, and as it came down its velocity would increase, so that it would pass through the same space in the same time.

CLARENCE.—1. If the ladies behave properly, they have a perfect right to drive to the party without a male escort. 2. We have never seen nor heard of the "apron" flirtation. 3. Pronounce as if spelled "beezhoo."

CARDAG.—Put no faith whatever in fortune-tellers' foolish tales. They know nothing whatever of the matter, and their stories are pure inventions. When you meet the gentleman, invite him to call upon you, and he will do so if he wishes to see you.

ROBERT S.—The whole sentence is intended to convey the idea that your lady-love reciprocates your affection, but that you will lose your favoured position if you are inattentive, and delay too long in asking for her hand.

W. S. T.—1. November 19, 1859, came on a Saturday; February 24, 1865, on a Friday. 2. It will be necessary to find out the cause of the nervousness before taking medicine for its relief or cure. Your only course, then, is to consult a physician.

E. M. M.—If you place the matter before your husband, and tell him how very much you feel his absence, he will take you to live with him where he is employed. Possibly he thinks that he cannot afford to support you in the way in which he wishes to live in that place.

P. M. H.—Chromo lithographs are those in which many colours are printed in one picture. Each colour is printed from a separate stone, so that in printing a picture of many colours twenty or thirty different stones are used. As each stone is made to fit its own part of the picture, the drawing has to be made with great care, for if one colour should be printed out of its place on the paper the picture would be spoiled; but one stone is often printed over the colour made by other stones, so as to make various tints or shades of colour. Oil paintings are copied very successfully in this way, and maps are also coloured in the same manner, each colour being printed separately. But e'etrotypes

plates are now mostly used instead of stones. Generally only three plates are employed, one for blue, one for yellow, and one for red. Green can be made by printing yellow over blue, orange by printing yellow over red, and purple by printing red over blue. Thus six colours can be printed from three plates.

E. W. M.—1. It is decidedly improper for young ladies to correspond with strange gentlemen. 2. Not knowing the cause for the sudden cessation of the correspondence, it would be a difficult matter to say whether the gentleman acted improperly or not.

A. C. L.—Do not marry any man unless you love him. Do not decide hastily, for you may be in ignorance of the real state of your heart. It is not a good plan to marry a very young man, and especially against the wishes of his parents.

TOM.—The only remedy for the present state of affairs is an early marriage. Unless you are able to claim your bride we advise you to stifle your jealous pangs; it would be cruel to ask her to wait indefinitely, and, meanwhile, to give up all society.

LADDIE R.—There is what might be called a language of the eyes, used by both sexes, but it has never been produced in type. The varied expression of the human eye—more especially when possessed by a charming woman—could never be adequately described. Suffice it to say that it is all-powerful, as can be testified to by nine-tenths of the male sex.

SEA SHELLS.

Storm-tossed they came to me,
From unknown depths of sea,
Their colours warm and rare,
As if from wood-pinks blown,
Or wild-rose petals, sown
On summer air.

These little boats of grey,
That now all stranded lay,
Were rocked by many a wave:
That coil as white as foam,
Were once a living home—
Perhaps a grave.

Flecked with allshades of brown,
From darkest chestnut down,
Are the round ones that curl;
That fan-like shell of blue
Has edge of darker hue,
With rays of pearl.

Who knows what patient hand
Did gather from the strand
These sea-bored, shapely things?
This one, with lips of pink,
We sometimes choose to think,
A sea-song sings.

A little song of love,
Caught from the world above,
And breathal of his bliss,
Unmarred by a complaint,
And free from any taint
Of worldliness.

Storm-tossed they came to me,
From unknown depths of sea,
Near islands girt with palm,
Or some wild northern shore,
To rest for evermore
In summer calm.

C. B. H.

J. J. R.—As you are rather young yet to marry, you had better wait and see if you cannot gain the mother's consent to your marriage. If you are constant and discreet you will be pretty sure to win your bride. You should at once make known your engagement. The young lady should have disclosed it immediately to her mother.

V. B. S.—1. Perhaps your manners are not very captivating, or your tempers are fiery. 2. Never correct a gentleman for any slight breach of etiquette before the assembled company, as it will doubtless make him feel very badly, and perhaps cause him to shun the society of one who has so little respect for his feelings. In such cases, if you are intimate friends, remind him in private of his error, and he will be thankful to you.

R. W. R.—We are deeply sorry for you in your suffering. We cannot advise you to waste money on advertised medicines. Paralysis comes from a variety of causes. The medicines you take may be, as far as they have any effect, the opposite of what a proper diagnosis of the case would suggest. Many persons have recovered fair strength and the use of the limb and arm after paralysis. Your best course is to place yourself in the hands of a competent physician, who has studied such cases.

C. L. G.—There is no ascertainable or verifiable truth in the story of the Golden Fleece, but it is believed to have arisen out of real events, which were magnified and idealized into narratives which are incredible to us moderns. We, of course, know that no sheep could have a fleece of actual gold; but a sheep might have fleeces of such weight and fineness and great value that it would get the name of, figuratively, bearing golden fleeces; and in a superstitious and imaginative age it would not take long to set a story about that a certain sheep had actually borne fleeces of real gold. The golden fleece which figures in the Greek legends was in the possession of the King of Colchis. Jason, the heir

to the throne of Iolchos, was sent to get it, the hope being that he would never return. The ship he sailed in was called the *Argo*, and he and his companions were the Argonauts, or sailors of the *Argo*, the syllable *nauta* coming from the same word that our common term nautical is derived from. Jason got the Golden Fleece, by the help of Medea, the daughter of the King of Colchis. He also brought away Medea, and married her, and became a prosperous Greek chieftain; but he finally deserted Medea for another princess, and then came to grief and death, as any man who deserts his wife ought to.

M. G. H.—He treated you shabbily, but as you love him so much, you are not to blame for having forgiven him. Perhaps he sees his mistake, and will be more constant in the future. There is no reason why he should not take you to places of amusement, unless it be for the want of the necessary money.

LITTLE LAURIE.—1. Your questions are exceedingly trivial, as they can be very easily answered by your own consciences. Girls of sixteen should think only of their studies, and not of corresponding with boys of the same age. 2. Wait until you have grown older, and then we feel sure you will find no trouble in returning the love of some worthy man, without asking any assistance from outside parties.

P. B. O.—1. India rubber combs are made by pressing soft rubber into moulds and "vulcanizing" them afterwards. 2. "Vulcanizing" rubber, so called from Vulcan, the god of fire, has added largely to its uses. It is done by mixing the rubber with sulphur, and then heating the mixture very hot, when the two unite into one substance, which cannot be dissolved by the things which will usually dissolve pure rubber.

RICHARD F.—The experience of mankind shows that it is about impossible for anyone to say with certainty what will win a woman's love. Milton says:—

"It is not virtue, wisdom, valour, wit,
Strength, comeliness of shape, or amplest merit
That woman's love can win, or long inherit;
What it is, 'tis hard to say, harder to hit."

W. S. M.—Rust spots may be removed from marble by applying to them a weak solution composed of one part of nitric acid and twenty-five parts of water, and afterwards rinsing with water and ammonia. To remove ink spots first wash with pure water and then with a weak solution of oxalic acid. The marble will have to be polished, however, as the acid dims the face of it. Diluted sulphuric acid and ammonia are used in freeing marble from copper spots, and sulphide of carbon is the best agent for the removal of match stains.

C. L. T.—1. The island of Cuba belongs to Spain being the most important of all the colonial possessions of that country. Before the revolution that commenced in 1898 and lasted for eleven years, the rule of the governor-captain-general was despotic in the highest degree; but Cuba is now entitled to representation in the Spanish Cortes at Madrid, and its inhabitants enjoy more freedom than formerly. 2. Coal oil is a natural product, which is procured in its crude state by boring wells.

M. S. S.—1. The word mausoleum is derived from the tomb erected at Halicarnassus to Mausolus, King of Caria, by his disconsolate widow, about 353 B.C. 2. Pharo was the name of a rocky islet off the coast of Egypt, which Alexander the Great connected with Alexandria by the "Heptastadion," or "Seven Furlong Mole." The lighthouse at its north-east point, commenced by Ptolemy I. (whose reign began in 323 B.C. and finished about 280 B.C., was reckoned as one of the seven wonders of the world. It is said to have been 400 feet high, and lasted for 1,600 years. The fire kept constantly lighted on its summit was, it is claimed, visible for forty miles.

C. L. G.—The fair inference, we regret to say, from the facts, is that the young man is more interested in your friend than in you. But you made a mistake in failing to speak to him. It is more in harmony with self-respect to take no notice of such things. You have nothing to do but carry yourself with womanly dignity and wait until a more congenial spirit to yours than his appears to be brought near you. Some ladies are so courteous to say that it will give them pleasure to receive a call; but it seems more in harmony with the fitness of things that the gentleman should, in fitting terms, express a desire to be permitted to call.

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